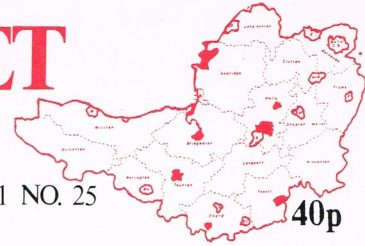


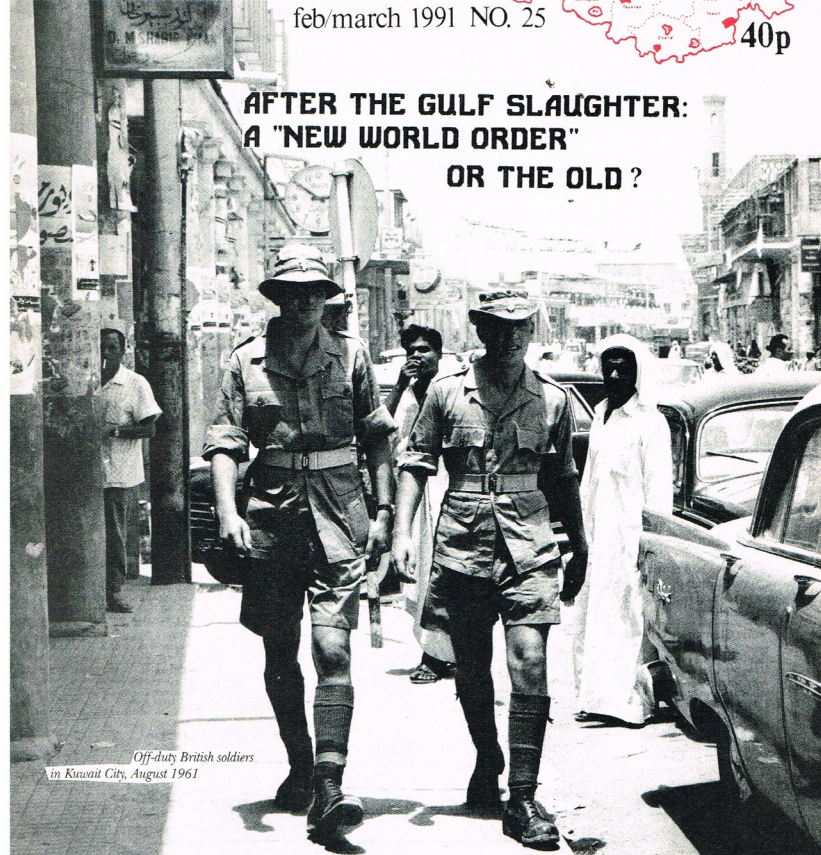
SOMERSET CLARION



feb/march 1991 NO. 25

40p

**AFTER THE GULF SLAUGHTER:
A "NEW WORLD ORDER"
OR THE OLD ?**



*Off-duty British soldiers
in Kuwait City, August 1961*

IMPERIALISM

Letter

Tom King MP
Minister of Defence,
Whitehall
London SW1

Dear Mr King,

Authoritative reports state that bombs equivalent in destructive power to at least 16 Hiroshima bombs will have been dropped on Iraq in the first 16 days. There has been nothing like this scale of destruction in human history. Even the military admit that at least 20% of their bombs miss their 'military targets' which include post offices, power stations, political party offices and virtually the whole of Iraq's industry and communications. No bombardment in this scale, however carefully targets are selected, can fail to kill and maim hundreds and thousands of people and to destroy a whole nation's infrastructure. It is only a matter of time before epidemics break out among starving people, deprived of power, water, shelter, medical aid.

This may be punishing Saddam but the price is being paid by Saddam's victims, the people of Iraq, and it is creating a wasteland that it will take decades to rebuild. I find it hard to believe that when you committed this country to this war you appreciated the sheer horror and wickedness of the crime now being committed by the US and its allies in the name of the United Nations.

Mrs Thatcher demanded the trial of Saddam for war crimes. But if those who planned and prepared this criminal war, and those who persist in it when they can see what it means, deserve to stand in the dock alongside him. This is not a just war, for the degree of force being used is totally disproportionate to the injury suffered. No follower of Jesus Christ, as I understand you are, could endorse this holocaust.

I am sending this letter to the press.

Yours sincerely,

Malcolm MacEwen
Wootton Courtenay, Minehead

Malcolm MacEwen was Editor of the Daily Worker in the 1940's. Pluto Press has just published his life story, 'The Greening of a Red'.



A student protester outside the former American Embassy in East Berlin

ADVERTISEMENT

STOP THE WAR NOW

As people who live and work in Bridgwater, we wish to protest at our Government waging war in the Gulf, instead of pursuing other measures to justly solve the problems there.

The scale of this war and the power of the weapons used will lead to slaughter and devastation on a massive scale in Kuwait, Iraq and the surrounding countries. Many tens of thousands of servicemen and civilians will die. Chemical and nuclear weapons may be used. If the oilfields catch fire, then the whole region will be laid waste for years to come, producing poverty, famine and possible ecological disaster.

This war will solve none of the many problems in the Middle East. Indeed, as Israel and other states are drawn in, the problems will get even worse.

This war is not being fought for freedom, but for oil and to maintain US control of the region. Iraq is fighting with weapons and technology sold by western companies for huge profits. We must accept responsibility for the vast military stockpiles which have now been unleashed.

The United Nations' charter says that war should only be declared when all other methods have been exhausted. They were NOT exhausted; indeed, they were barely even tried.

Angie Arnott, Malcolm Aslett, Crispin and Sue Aubrey, June Bassett, John and Phil Bayley, Andy Bearne, Glen Burrows, Alison Campion, Glen Cane, Allan Challenger, Dave Chapple, Barry Cooper, G. Custer, Graham Dummett, Sue Ellacott, Jan Gannaway, Sue Habgood, Gwynn and Sue Holland, Isabel Haggins, Jeff Ham, M. James, Alan Jeffery, Carol Jerram, Liz Lee, Gilly Lee, Richard Lee, Jock Mikshik, Gill Moore, Pat Morley, Bob Ormrod, Roz Picciora, Norman Scott, Gail Scoullar, Perry Stephens, Julian Tomlin, Pat Tomlin, Cynthia Dawes, Clive Wynn, Irena Wynn, John Taylor, Ruth Baker.

This is issued by the Somerset Campaign Against War in the Gulf, supported by Bridgwater and District Trades Council, Sedgemoor Green Party and Somerset Community Defence Campaign.

Messages of support, donations (payable to Somerset CAWG.) to: A. Challenger, 48 Estuary Park, Comblwich TA5 2RF.

Anthem for Doomed Youth

What passing bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,
Nor any voices of mourning save their choirs—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells,
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Wilfred Owen, 1893-1915

Bridgwater Mercury, January 22nd, 1991.

FALKLANDS 1982 - KUWAIT 1991

3

We asked Stuart Croskell, from Chilton Polden, who fought in the Falklands War to write about his feelings then and now, as another more terrible war begins in the Gulf.

And then do you know what happened?

Well...there's various bereaved, miserable persons haunting and hanging around, dillying and dallying, not really knowing what to do, all recent members of the Profound Sense of Loss Club, attending numerous churchyards, cemeteries, war memorials -- whatever vaguely sanctified area takes your fancy --- and all unable to exorcise their grief in any manner, not having their loved one's body towards which they can channel their hurt. And there's limbless, blind, disfigured and/or insane, strange, blobby, plastic talking things that mimic Homo Sapiens, are denied the love of women/men and wonder why advanced surgery is not more advanced; these heroes shambling and shitting and vomiting and cluttering up England's green and pleasant land, and the National Health can't really cope. Not really.

And the relatively unscathed who return in one piece: I'm a professional, it's my job, what I'm paid to do, but even so, even so, I don't sleep too well; can't seem to get the sand out of the foreskin, the retina registers things that aren't really there, marriage is on the dunes, ha, and it transpires I'm unemployable, and well, you know. And there's a thousand tragic stories and a thousand tragic families and not enough documentary crews or peak

viewing hours to go round. Close up of shaking, nicotine stained fingers; camera slow pans to photograph on mantelpiece of young, uniformed, half formed, inanely smiling son/husband/father; dissolve into medium shot, red-eyed, soul dead, hope abandoned daughter/wife/mother; it's a bit hack, a bit cornball, clichéd, but it happens, is happening. Interviewer looks on, the epitome of empathy, he understands. God does he understand, saddened, world weary wise beyond his years but he still can't hide a surreptitious glance at his watch from the interviewee. Train to catch. Life to live. I can leave this room, this pain. Thank God. Rights have been sold to Warner Bros but Fox put in a pretty close bid. Correspondents That Were There out manoeuvre each other to obtain the best contract with the best coffee table publishing house. The BBC are to release the Official Video soon. There's a spate of poetry, feverish script writing, but it's all second rate, crummy stuff; nevertheless all this input represents a movement, a force of creativity that will eventually turn into The Package. Then neatly wrapped, stowed away, to be brought out now and again, to be sniffed at, pissed on, the occasional investigative type raising the odd injustice here and there, now and again; the obligatory, ostensibly startling military expose --- of awe-inspiring incompetence, naff tactics, strategy, etc. Then put it away. Brought out again. Then put away. A Thorn, yes, but under control. I counted them all out; sod all seemed to come back though. Funny that. People seem surprised when combatants lives are lost in a war, especially our combatants. Our Boys.

So raise a salute to the Pump of the Unknown Petrol Attendant. Somebody must know what this is all about.



"MEMBERS of a Labour club last night voted to ban their local MP because she voted against Britain entering the Gulf war.

Mrs Audrey Wise, MP for Preston, was one of 34 Labour MPs who opposed military action in a Commons vote. Mr Stan Barker, vice-chairman of the Ingot Labour Club in Preston, said: "We are so disgusted we have ripped up her membership card."

"And London radio station Jazz FM sacked DJ Gilles Peterson for telling listeners there was a peace march at the same time as his show."

TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT WAR

The blatant falsehoods of our right-wing gutter press, which sport Union Jacks for 'our boys', as if war is just another world-cup, knock-out tournament, demand a reply.

For the record, I have been involved with CND and the peace movement at various levels (currently national council member and local co-ordinator) for the past 35 years, and I spent much time 'under attack' in the last world war. Apart from the bombs and horrendous daily plane sorties, our house was missed by only 50 metres from a crashing Spitfire where, from amongst the eventual remains, we returned the dead pilot's thumb to the local hospital.

Protesting for peace and against the immorality of wars and the international arms trade has never been a gimmick or an easy armchair option. Some of my comrades are at the International Peace camp on the Saudi-Kuwait border, between the enormous opposing armies, and I wish I could be there in this magnificent stand for humanity against the madness of a deliberately contrived and phoney war.

This war is phoney because the US/UK perpetrators of it have no aims other than imperialism, which they fraudulently disguise as stopping Saddam Hussein's immoral, tyrannical behaviour - even to the extent of gerrymandering UN support and 'Allied' military intervention. As most of us realise, the imperialism is simply the continued control of Middle-East oil by US military power, via US-friendly puppet dictatorships.

Somewhat like 'evil' Noriega in Panama over-stepping the drug-trafficking mark, Saddam, previously befriended for his past 'evils', suddenly has to be ass-kicked for getting too big for western-supplied 'army boots' by invading US-friendly Kuwait. If only he could have stayed just plain 'evil', committing atrocities amongst his own people - like Pol Pot, Marcos, Galtieri, Pinochet, the Contras, Verwoerd, Dung Chau Ping etc. - he would have been assured of constant US support! I've consistently campaigned against Saddam Hussein's evil regime for the past 5 years!

'OVER THE TOP'

When the Army wants a hard, street-fighting soldier they ask for a Scottish regiment. When they want a battle-winning one they call up the Royal Scots.

All the sophisticated weaponry Britain has shipped to the Gulf may wound Saddam, but it will be the oldest infantry regiment in the land who will finish him off.

For ultimately this will be a trench war and the Royal Scots are ultimate trench warriors.

As proud of their regimental history as of their aggression, they style themselves Pontius Pilot's bodyguards. If they had been around to guard him, so the story goes, Jesus would never have Risen from the Sepulchre.

Their distinguished service down the years is legendary and the mechanical first battalion here are aiming to prove it in the desert.

Before we left, Colonel Ian Johnston said: "The Jocks are unstoppable. I want them in among the trenches killing Iraqis in a big way. I want them to get used to the idea of stabbing and shooting - that is what the Jocks do."

After the massive movement of men and machines the troops are in place, the training complete and supply lines secure. Now we await nothing more than the signal for battle.

Sick jingoism from the Western Daily Press
January 1991.

The war was deliberately contrived by the way in which the enormous US/UK military build-up went from Desert Shield, to Sword, to Storm, as an unbelievably coincidental transference of redundant armed forces from the dissolved East-West Cold War to the next strategically vital theatre for western domination, without as much as a whisper of consultation with the US or British people. It was an 'arms manufacturers' paradise. They realised that most of us support 'defence', but would have to be thoroughly brain-washed into highly costly 'offensive' operations, thousands of miles from home. Didn't it seem odd how the war option surreptitiously dawned, not only to become the 'premeditated' US/UK 'inevitable', but also to become the best and only option for Saddam? How convenient then the lack of real discouragement for the Iraqi incursion into Kuwait!

To conclude with a positive peace message to our dear ones and other human beings in the Gulf: to best protect yourselves out there, and ourselves back home, get the whole world to demand an immediate, unconditional cease-fire and re-opening of peace negotiations (via UN or Arab nations) before the wholesale carnage of the land offensive starts!

It is peaceful settlement not war which must be the hallmark of any new-age UN solidarity, if it is to truly produce a new world judicial system and 'police force' for the long-term future. Also it is the 'war machine' of the world, and its western-led, immoral arms trade, which must be systematically dismantled. NOT JUST the military might of Saddam Hussein. A good start for the UN is the adoption of a comprehensive test-ban treaty for nuclear weapons and the closely related non-proliferation agreement. These treaties are up for re-negotiation right now and the US/UK must not continue to block them for militaristic development purposes. There is still a chance that the world's expected 'peace dividend' resulting from the disappearance of the Cold War can still be salvaged from the wreckage of the Gulf War.

ALAN DEBENHAM
Taunton Green Party
CND National Council



WAR KILLS ALL LIFE !

Politicians worldwide are not yet used to assessing the global and environmental repercussions of their policies and likely actions. Therefore there has been little publicity given to the impact of hostilities in the Gulf on the ecology of the immediate area and the wider region.

Scientists' projections and computer models point to the long-term damage to the environment and climate of the region and the probability of thousands of millions of deaths as a result.

CRIME AGAINST THE PLANET

It is a decision of breathtaking ignorance and narrow political expediency to use force to oust Saddam Hussein rather than to focus political will on continuing with sanctions and the determination to find a settlement through negotiation. The repercussions of force would mean a higher death toll outside the theatre of war and damage, irreversible in our lifetime, to the earth's environment. Such a war would surely constitute a crime against the planet of far greater proportions than the crime of Saddam Hussein's which provided the reason for war in the first place. The concept of crime against the planet is beginning to permeate the thinking of international organisations and legislatures; it is an idea which urgently needs to find expression in political thinking.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

So just what are the environmental consequences of an escalation of hostilities in the Gulf? First there is the threat to the ecology of the immediate area. Massive tanks manoeuvring across the desert run the risk of bursting open oil pipelines which form a network across Kuwait, pumping oil at great pressure. Spillage, apart from posing an immense pollution problem to clear, could seriously damage the desert environment and its complexly adapted life-forms.

Over the last 10 years the Iraqis have developed an intricate river barrage system to alleviate spring flooding on the Lower Mesopotamian Plain. If these dams are attacked the impact on farming will be disastrous. The unchannelled floodwater would carry off valuable topsoil. This fertile agricultural region would face severe pollution from pesticides, sewage and agrochemicals, endangering the livelihood of thousands.

RELEASE OF PATHOGENS

The bombing of strategic chemical plants where disabling agents such as tear gas and nerve gas are held would be a risk to all forms of life. Of particular concern is the Iraqi capacity to produce hydrogen cyanide and cyanogen chloride. It is very alarming if there are stocks of the British invention VX which is shrouded in secrecy. Little is known of its properties officially, except that it is highly persistent and deadly. If installations storing or manufacturing such gases are bombed, lethal self-propagating pathogens will be released into the atmosphere.

If Iraq's experimental nuclear reactors are hit the region will then have to deal with the notorious consequences of meltdown.

Another grave danger is the impact of fuel-air explosions - technology designed to clear Iraq's minefields. Their effect is reported to be more destructive than anything yet seen outside atomic warfare.

FAILURE OF MONSOONS

In an article released in advance of its publication in the January '91 edition of the Institute of Chemical Engineers Environmental Protection Bulletin, Dr John Cox warns of the catastrophic consequences which could result from the burning of Iraqi oil wells. The pall of sooty smoke he says 'could be as great as predicted by nuclear war scenarios and, almost without exception, these predict failure of the Asian monsoons'. As more than 1000 million people rely on the monsoon rains for their crops, if their arrival was delayed the death toll from starvation would be greater than the combined populations of Kuwait, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

OZONE DEPLETION

Then there is the likelihood of the creation of an ozone hole from the uncontrolled burning of oil. The probable rate of progress in arresting oil well fires with all fire fighters mobilised and a cessation of conflict indicates it may take up to 10 months to put them out. As long as 3 years at the rate of one a day. This scale of ozone depletion is devastating for plant and animal life. Without the protection of ozone, ultra violet light reaches earth in amounts that would endanger many life-forms and severely increase the incidence of cancer, cataracts and other medical conditions.

If politicians would allow themselves to take in the enormity of the potential environmental effects of a Gulf War, they would surely acknowledge that the only sane way forward is a non-military solution to the Gulf crisis for the sake of the planet and all of its people.

CAROL CARNALL
GREEN PARTY PROSPECTIVE
PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE, WELLS
CONSTITUENCY

The Green Party has consistently opposed war in the Gulf as unjustifiable, unnecessary and unwinnable

Carol Carnall Lives in Glastonbury



US Anti War Demonstration.

The following letter was written to the Secretary of Cannington & Combwich Labour Party (Bridgwater CLP) on the outbreak of war in the Gulf. Allan Challenger is a member of CND, Treasurer of Bridgwater APTU, President of Bridgwater Trades Union Council and a member of the Somerset Campaign Against War in the Gulf

Dear Dave,

I am writing to submit my resignation from the Labour Party.

Labour's support for war in the Gulf is of course the precipitating factor, but in reality only the final straw.

You will be aware that I have been unhappy about the direction taken by the leadership of the Labour Party in recent years, at both national and local level.

Its utter failure to support people who have been forced to battle for their jobs and communities has been so shocking: from the miners' strike to the Poll Tax, the story has been the same. This is no sour grapes that things aren't what I'd like them to be; it is a realisation that the structures of the Party are so deeply conservative and hostile to change, ideas, activity.

On every vital issue the Party abandons its supposed principles in favour of support for the state. The most ludicrous example of this has been its refusal to build opposition to the poll tax, on the objective position of the majority of Labour's natural constituency, working people and the poor. Instead of recognising the obvious, that people could not afford to pay and therefore help them organise to defend themselves, the Party adhered to the niceties of capitalist legality and abandoned them to the courts and bailiffs.

I shouldn't be surprised by this: the history of the Labour Party is that it knows no other way. It was the same Labour Party in the 30s that refused to support the campaign of the unemployed and that expelled members for trying to build a united front against fascism in Europe;

GULF CRISIS IN THE



● Anti-Gulf War protesters during the one minute's silence of remembrance at Bridgwater's War Memorial in King Square



Bradley House
68 Coombe Road
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey KT2 7AE
Surrey KT2 7AE
(081-541 1765)

The Fire Brigades Union

**The Fire Brigades Union
sends New Year
Greetings to all working
for peace and progress
in 1991**

Stop War in the Gulf

Stan Fitzsimmons
President

Ken Cameron
General Secretary

The South West Region of the FBU is affiliated to the SDC/Somerset Clarion and orders 20 Clarions each issue.

WORKERS IN TURKEY SAY NO TO WAR! SUPPORT STRIKERS !

The Turkish government is one of the biggest supporters of US policy in the Middle East. There are many US bases in Turkey and all the US nuclear weapons in the Middle East are stored there. The Turkish government is enthusiastically pro-war. Turkish workers, however, are fighting back and demanding 'No To War'.

48,000 miners in Zonguldak struck on 1st December in the biggest all out industrial action in Turkey since the military coup in 1980. There have been daily massive demonstrations in Zonguldak. 6,000 women took to the streets. Shops in Zonguldak were closed for two days in solidarity and parents did not send their children to school for three days to show their support. The Government is threatening pit closures and has brought tens of thousands of soldiers and police to the region from other provinces.

120,000 engineering workers have now also gone on strike, and on January 3rd 1991, 1.5 million workers went on a one day General Strike. The Turkish Government has used the danger of the Gulf War as an excuse for banning the strikes, but workers have ignored the bans and made 'No To War' one of their main slogans.

On January 4th 80,000 miners, miners' wives and supporters set out to march the 150 miles from Zonguldak, a mining area on the Black Sea coast of Turkey, to Ankara the capital. On January 6th they were stopped by barricades and tanks set up by troops and police after getting a third of the way to Ankara. 326 miners were arrested. The miners have now marched back to Zonguldak, but their strike continues. And millions of other workers in Turkey are due to strike soon. All of these workers face the prospect of their strikes being banned, with the Gulf War being used as the excuse.

Halil Elibash, a miner at the Kozlu pit said: "I have worked here for 18 years. I earn 400,000 lira (£70) a month. When I went to register two of my children for school, I found that the school books for one of them would cost 120,000 lira. The school books for two of my children will cost me half my monthly wage. What are we supposed to eat this winter?"

In Turkey the official rate of inflation is 55%, the true rate is probably closer to 80%. An average worker has to work half an hour to earn the price of a loaf of bread, 7 hours to earn the price of a kilo of meat and 800 hours to earn the price of a refrigerator! Since the military coup in 1980, the share of wages in the national income has fallen from 43% to 17.4%.

These new workers' actions represent an important new beginning of the workers movement in Turkey after the defeats imposed by the military coup in 1980. The miners are saying 'a victory for us will be a victory for all'. Their opposition to the war, in a country so close to the conflict, means that our struggle is linked to theirs. The miners need money and solidarity to keep up their struggle. A committee has been set up in London to build solidarity between British workers and striking miners in Turkey and to collect money to support their struggle.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Will your trade union branch, shop stewards committee or other trade union body sponsor this committee? Can you pass the following resolution:

"This trade union branch/shop stewards committee supports the strike of the miners in Turkey for a decent living wage, in defence of their jobs and for the right to strike, against war and for political freedom. We agree to sponsor the Solidarity Committee with The Striking Miners - Turkey and to donate ... to hold regular workplace collections and to invite a speaker from the Solidarity Committee."

Send copies of the resolution to the Solidarity Committee at the above address and to the Union, Genel Maden İş Sendikası, Zonguldak, TURKEY. If you have access to a fax machine, the number is 010 90 381 366 35.

Send donations to:

Solidarity Committee with Striking Miners - Turkey
c/o Trade Union Support Unit
Liberty Hall
489 Kingsland Road
LONDON E8 4AU
071-241 0943

AFFILIATE TO THE SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE! £5.

When war turns brothers in arms into deadly enemies

WHEN the signal reached us that several Iraqi navy vessels had been sunk we allowed ourselves a moment of rejoicing.

But there were thoughts, too, of a more sombre kind. When war turns friends into deadly enemies, emotions become painfully confused.

Such a problem faced Duncan Skippings, aged 26, a sub-lieutenant on board HMS Brazen currently in the Gulf.

He met and befriended two Iraqi naval officers in 1987.

"It's quite possible they

By Ian McKerron
on board HMS Brazen

were on board one of those vessels which were sunk," said Sub-Lieutenant Skippings, from Melkham in Wiltshire.

He and the two young Iraqis, Abdullah and Nagi, trained together at the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth.

"Those two guys had to be

the most popular foreign students at the college," said Sub-Lieutenant Skippings.

"They made a big effort to mix in with the other students and were well-liked."

"I got on especially well with Abdullah."

"Naturally I would be saddened if I learned that Abdullah or Nagi had been killed. Saddam Hussein is the enemy in this war, not the ordinary Iraqi people."

"What I do know is that if I ever meet Abdullah again when peace has been restored I would hope we would still be friends."

Yours fraternally,

JEFF BAXTER
PLYMOUTH SWP

"Britain sold 300 military Land-Rovers and a large quantity of radar equipment to Iraq in 1985. In addition unknown numbers of Iraqi servicemen have been trained at Ministry of Defence establishments. So long as we continue to operate a policy of almost indiscriminate arms sales, the more likely it is that our armed forces will find themselves confronted in future wars by British-made weapons operated by British-trained enemies."

Graham Davey
Campaign Against Arms Trade
Bristol Eve. Post.

Letter

Dear Comrades,

I would like to comment on Brian Smedley's article on the Gulf Crisis. Although I agree with the overall sentiments of the article, I am at odds with his criticisms of the far left's attitude towards the crisis.

He takes an answer to a particular question: i.e. 'In the event of war do we want an American victory or defeat?' then with deliberate ambiguity implies that this is a generalised principle. To say that somehow we support Saddam Hussein and all the crimes he has committed against the Iraqi and Kurdish peoples is patently untrue and very insulting.

What we want is for Saddam Hussein to be overthrown by the Iraqi and Kurdish working class and for all the international working class to do the same in their own countries. But in the scenario of a Gulf War we come back again to the question: an American victory or defeat? We must answer 'an American defeat', and if that means military support for the Iraqi army then that support should be forthcoming.

Brian Smedley avoids this question and instead puts forward an abstract notion of 'an international solution' which of course means the UN. It's ironic that in seeking to avoid supporting nasty old Saddam Hussein Brian Smedley ends up looking to the world club of the capitalist class, whose system is the root cause of this war and every other bloody slaughter the world has periodically plunged into.

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By Ian McKerron
on board HMS Brazen

were on board one of those vessels which were sunk, said Sub-Lieutenant Skippings, from Melkham in Wiltshire.

He and the two young Iraqis, Abdullah and Nagi, trained together at the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth.

"Those two guys had to be the most popular foreign

students at the college," said Sub-Lieutenant Skippings.

"They made a big effort to mix in with the other students and were well-liked."

"I got on especially well with Abdullah."

"Naturally I would be saddened if I learned the Abdullah or Nagi had been killed. Saddam Hussein is the enemy in this war, not the ordinary Iraqi people."

"What I do know is that if I ever meet Abdullah again when peace has been restored I would hope we would still be friends."

"Britain sold 300 military Land-Rovers and a large quantity of radar equipment to Iraq in 1985. In addition unknown numbers of Iraqi servicemen have been trained at Ministry of Defence establishments. So long as we continue to operate a policy of almost indiscriminate arms sales, the more likely it is that our armed forces will find themselves confronted in future wars by British-made weapons operated by British-trained enemies."

Graham Davey
Campaign Against Arms Trade
Bristol Eve. Post.

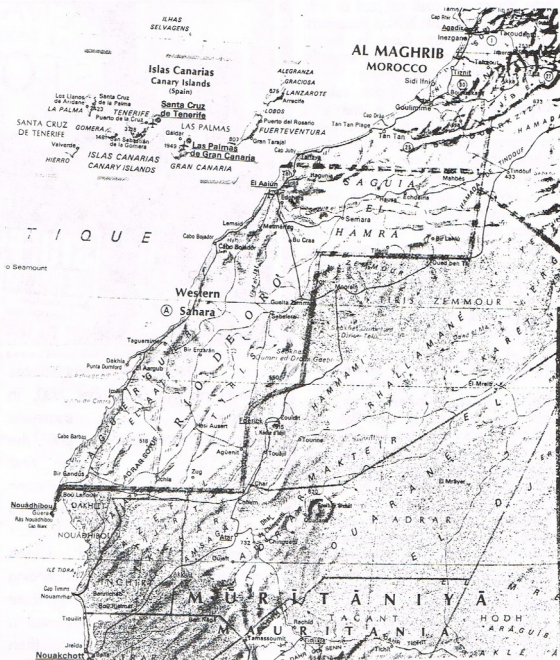
Western Daily Press, January 1991.

WAR IN WESTERN SAHARA

9

While the world's media focuses our attention on the Gulf, a 15-year old liberation struggle is continuing, virtually unreported, in the Western Sahara.

It is a country almost the size of Britain, situated in North West Africa, between Morocco and Mauritania, and a Spanish colony until Franco officially withdrew in 1975. Instead of the promised independence, the Spanish government handed the Western Sahara to Morocco, and the country became a victim of the war between Morocco and Mauritania. The Saharawi people took arms in defence of their own country's existence and the country was proclaimed a republic in 1976, recognised by the United Nations. In 1979 a peace agreement was reached with Mauritania, and the Saharawis continued to fight against their Moroccan occupation. Despite condemnation by the UN, King Hassan's conscript armies used cluster bombs, phosphorus and napalm to drive the people into the desert and over the border into Southern Algeria, where they have been allowed to set up refugee camps.



HUNDREDS KILLED

The Western Sahara Campaign, based in London, is currently working to bring attention to the suffering this war has caused. Zahra Hasanour came to the Socialist Movement Conference in Taunton last year to promote the campaign. She described the plight to the refugee camps, which are situated in the most inhospitable areas of the Saharan Desert, in temperatures reaching 120 C. Hundreds lost their lives and many are still disabled from the bombing attacks. 800 Saharawi civilians have been detained since 1975, in jails with appalling conditions. Almost half of the detainees are women, and nothing has been heard of the babies born to them in prison. Zahra told us of the plight of one her closest friends, Enbarka Taleb, a school headteacher, who was taken away by the secret police in the presence of her daughter in 1976 and has not been heard of since. Her only crime was refusing to be Moroccan.

Interested Please Contact
Western Sahara Campaign, c/o
Edmore, Langley Marsh,
Lyvelsombe, Somerset.

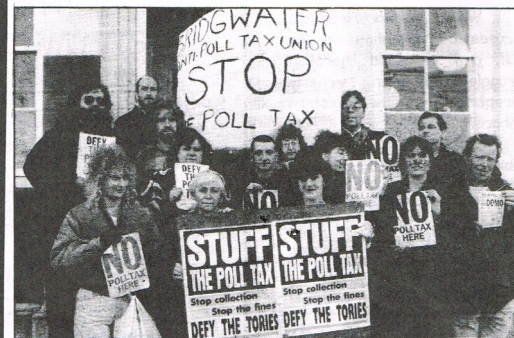
BRITISH PROFITS

The glossy holiday brochures advertising Morocco are particularly important to King Hassan. He needs the revenue from tourists to subsidise the war effort. His army has built a 2,000 km long wall of sand to keep the Saharawis out, and the smaller Saharawi army, the Polisario, is engaged in guerrilla attacks along the wall with weapons supplied by Algeria. Many of the weapons captured by the Polisario are made in Britain - there is no ban on shipping arms to Morocco, so the British arms industry can continue to make comfortable profits out of a war which the capitalist media connives to keep 'secret'. At least 10,000 Moroccans are believed to have died defending their king's interest in the Western Sahara - a country rich in mineral deposits such as phosphates and a 500 mile coastline with well-stocked fishing grounds.

WOMEN'S COUNCILS

Now, 165,000 people live in the refugee camps. At first the conditions were terrible - people had left their homes with just the clothes they were wearing. Whooping cough was rife and measles epidemic. At one time there were 60 child deaths every day. Now the situation is very different. The camps are run by women (the men are back from the war for 15 days in every two months), and they have achieved miracles in less than a generation. The developmental work has cultivated several hundreds acres of desert. Illiteracy amongst women was virtually 100% under Spanish colonialism, now it is almost non-existent. Education is a high priority for the women's councils, which also organise food and health supplies. Creches are provided at all women's schools, which also organise food and health supplies.

BATH POLL TAX COURT



Bridgwater's anti poll tax union turned out to protest against the tax in March.

Creches are provided at all women's schools and children's education begins at three. Women who could not read or write 15 years ago now hold political discussions, many of them are fluent in several languages and are studying university courses. The Western Sahara has a mixture of Arab and African cultures. Religion for the refugees is entirely a matter of personal choice, and there are no arranged marriages - the women have achieved equality. They also receive military training, although none are yet joining the men, who go to fight 'if they can hold a rifle'. Despite the obvious difficulties of refugee accommodation the people have retained their dignity and self-sufficiency, they have a desire to learn and a thirst for freedom. In Zahra's words, her 'country is small and has always disliked war. We want to live in peace and have a secure education.'

UN PEACE PLAN REFUSED BY HASSAN

Britain is a member of the United Nations Security Council which has unanimously approved a Peace Plan. This includes a referendum for the Saharawis on whether they want independence or to be integrated into Morocco. Hassan is not co-operating and insists on leaving his troops in the Western Sahara. The Saharawis are hoping that western nations will put pressure on Hassan to implement the Peace Plan. Under the Plan they have already released 200 Moroccan prisoners as a goodwill gesture, but Hassan refused to take the men back.

Unfortunately it is not in the interests of the western nations to highlight the Saharawi liberation struggle. Amnesty International has released a report on human rights abuses in Morocco and the treatment of the Saharawi, dismissed as 'propaganda' by the Moroccan Embassy who denied that there was a war. When America can hide behind the shield of the UN as it attacks the Iraqi people in the interests of maintaining a cheap oil supply, and the UN remains steadfastly inactive over the massive injustice being wrought on the people of Lithuania, there is little likelihood that the member countries will oppose Hassan. Profit from arms sales is likely to be higher on their list of priorities than the plight of a small country in Africa, however exemplary a society the refugees have managed to build.

There is a Saharawi saying which, roughly translated, means: the more help we can bring to one another, the happier we'll all be. The people are living in hope of freedom. The help we can bring them is in raising the profile of this campaign.

West Somerset CND
MARION MANN West Somerset NUT

I attended Bath Magistrates Court on 4th December 1990, in response to a summons concerning refusal to pay the Poll Tax. This was the first session for Wansdyke non-payers and I was number two on their list. The first defendant managed to sustain fifteen minutes of questions regarding procedures but the magistrate became impatient and imposed a liability order. My turn then came and I was able to make the following statement:

"My dispute is with the Government and not Wansdyke District Council, to whom I have always paid rates promptly, under a system which did not penalise others.

"A penny in hand - result happiness. A penny in debt - result misery." So said Mr Micawber in Charles Dickens' 'David Copperfield'. There are many on the breadline who are having to count the pennies when trying to make ends meet and who, if forced to pay, will suffer further erosion of an already meagre standard of living. These include the jobless, young couples, non-earning housewives, one parent families and the elderly who are particularly vulnerable. Some will pay (because they are too frightened to refuse) with money which should have been spent on fuel and food. Many could die this year from poorer diet, hypothermia or both.

The summons concerns my ability to pay the poll tax. I am unable to do so because it would betray others, by endorsing a law which takes from the poor and gives to the rich.

Finally, I recall an anecdote very relevant to the present situation. During the late 1930s, there were two actors named Roberts & Hare who appeared in many comedies. Hare portrayed a small, balding, timid, bespectacled specimen of English gentility and became famous for a catchphrase which interrupted performances with prolonged applause. The phrase was spoken in a voice of pained horror whenever a difficult situation arose in the play, and consisted of just two words which I will try to reproduce accurately. They were "OH CALAMITY!" May I suggest that calamity is what the government have brought upon both themselves and the British people, in creating this evil tax."

The magistrates listened intently, with amusement at the anecdote, but needless to say, imposed the liability order. Wansdyke District Council has chosen bailiffs as their first move and I am expecting an unannounced visit during the next few days (visits with no verbal or written warning at all appears to be their latest strategy).

I have just read that Sheriff's Officers employed by Strathclyde Council have smashed their way into the homes of three poll tax non-payers and carried away goods for auction.

MIKE VINCENT
CHEW VALLEY ANTI POLL TAX UNION

Mike Vincent is treasurer of the
Somerset Community Defence Campaign.

RESIST SOMERSET'S EDUCATION CUTS

Two large protest movements rocked 'Tory' Somerset during 1990. Firstly, anger at the introduction of the Poll Tax led to thousands taking to the streets in March and the mushrooming of anti-poll tax groups. In the second half of the year, proposals to axe £6 million from Somerset's Education Service generated petitions, thousands of protest letters, prompted school governors to threaten mass resignation and culminated in a demonstration in Taunton equal, if not slightly larger, than the Poll Tax march the previous Spring. The issues were inextricably linked - the Tories explicitly said so when they claimed that the Education cuts were due to the supposed threat of Poll Tax Capping. Yet the two movements had very few points of contact.

Barring the unlikely possibility that February's rubber-stamping council meeting will overturn the 1991-92 budget, the decisions made about where money won't be spent on Education have largely been made. Now is therefore the right time to draw up a balance sheet of our own of the successes and failures of the campaign against the cuts, learn lessons and prepare for future battles.

SUCCESSSES

Foremost among the successes must be counted the complete reversal of some



Somerset Council Nursery

budget proposals: the reinstatement of the post (and budget) of the Under-5s Development Officer; the reintroduction of measures that help probationary teachers in primary classrooms; and the retention of bonuses to primaries with large reception classes. Money was squeezed from the council to set up new nursery classes and help playgroups (including those helping children with learning difficulties). The proposal to sack teachers and assistants working in the field of Special Educational Needs was postponed pending a review of this service (although cuts of £70,000 are still planned in 1991/92). On the most controversial budget issue - the scrapping of the County policy of admitting children to school in the year in which they are five (the 'Rising 5s' policy) victory was partial. A two-stage entry system will be imposed which will admit under-5s to school in the Autumn term if their 5th birthday falls between 1st September and 31st December and admit children whose 5th birthday is between 1st January and 31st August in the Spring Term.

LOSSES

On the negative side the most devastating loss was the destruction of the School Meals Service, leading to the sack for 850 staff. It is important to realise too that there will still be cuts to the Education Service amounting to £4.9 million in 1991/92 (in a full year, cuts of £5.65m rather than £5m). Given these stark facts it could be argued that the anti-cuts movement achieved very little. While victories may have been exaggerated, the fact that the Tories were forced to make embarrassing U-turns is significant. But could they have been forced to go further? How can we build on what's been achieved to prevent massive cuts already being prepared for 1992/93?

RESISTANCE PIECEMEAL & UNCOORDINATED

Firstly we must learn from what has happened in the past 4 months. The full educational implications of the cuts became clear in the September and very quickly opposition blossomed. Because of the short time available between then and the next round of Education budget-making and as most people were organising from scratch, resistance was at first piecemeal and uncoordinated. The Council unions, who could have used their resources to bring together the various school-based groups, confined themselves to planning a demonstration on November 24th. While a demonstration was clearly necessary, it could not substitute for organisation and a clear strategy to win.

Nor should the unions escape criticism for their failure to mobilise members and lack of public campaigning on the issue of school meals, despite advanced warning of the council's intentions regarding the service. Valuable weeks were wasted while NUPE officials negotiated cuts in members' hours and paid holiday (for the second time in 6 months!) so that catering management could put a 'savings package' to a council which had shown not the slightest interest in anything other than complete wind-down of the service. Not only did the negotiations hold out the false hope of a compromise to union members, they were also completely the wrong starting point to start any fight to save jobs. Only after the Tories predictably rejected the NUPE/DSO deal was the possibility of industrial action canvassed.

No other union, to my knowledge, even discussed industrial action against cuts except for Taunton and West Somerset NUT. Here, a call for one-day strike action on the day of the November full council meeting was defeated on the grounds that a strike would annoy parents. If you can ever win parents to supporting a teachers' strike surely it is for one against education cuts!



Day Release Training
Bridgwater College

SAVE OUR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES 12

SAVE OUR SCHOOLS

The movement in September was in danger of being completely uncoordinated and directionless. However, one grass-roots organisation began to emerge - Save Our Schools (SOS) - which assumed the role of coordinator and planner. There were (and are) I believe some organisational problems with SOS (it is very Taunton-based for one thing) but nevertheless it became identified (most importantly by schools fighting the cuts) as the leading body in the fight, and I believe it is a genuine reflection of the vast opposition to the cuts existing in Somerset. With SOS emerged a sort of strategy: media stunts; a petition that attracted thousands of signatures; and a letter-writing campaign all designed to put pressure on the Tories, particularly those identified as somehow 'soft'. The one thing SOS did not have and actively discouraged was any politics. This kept SOS from having anything to say about the roots of cuts - the poll tax. In the last analysis, Tory desperation to peg spiralling poll tax bills held the Tory group together, and apart from one or two abstentions by Tory members, the hoped-for backbench revolt never happened.

MOVEMENT LACKED POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

If the movement lacked any political perspective then the opposition parties showed no desire to suggest any. Gratefully, three Liberal Democrat speakers (including party leader Paddy Ashdown) took the platform at the 24th November demo to denounce anyone who wanted to make the protest 'political'. The majority of Taunton CLP seemed to agree with this approach to the extent that the CLP banner was kept at the party's xmas bazaar rather than taken on the march.

While anti-poll tax groups have been pre-occupied by court cases and bailiffs, some attempts were made to link up with the anti-cuts campaign and contingents from some APTUs were clearly visible in the November march.

PREPARE FOR FUTURE BATTLE

What of the future? The Chief Education Officer has reported that if present trends continue "significant real reductions in spending will be required in 1992/93". The battle ground in the coming year could be in Special Educational Needs, the Youth Service, post-16 education or any non-statutory aspect of provision. The Tories are looking into asset-stripping - sales of school playing fields etc to buy themselves out of the mess. Many more schools may be 'rationalised'.



Adult Education,
Bridgwater College.

Whatever happens, one thing is sure, there will be attempts to cut Education this year. We need to be prepared.

We must broaden and democratise organisations such as SOS, drawing in groups like Student Unions who are affected by cuts and linking up with anti-poll tax groups. Union members need to try to get their branches involved and develop clear strategies for fighting cuts. We should also be prepared to fight opt-out proposals by schools disillusioned with lack of funding, and oppose the current threats to remove Education from local control. Would you trust Michael Heseltine with your children's future?

TONY SERJEANT
SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCILLOR &
MEMBER OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE

If you want more information, a fact-sheet on the cuts is available from Tony Serjeant, 'Widmore', Langley Marsh, Wiveliscombe, Somerset.

THE ANIMAL RIGHTS DEBATE

John Kipling in August's *Clarion* said that "Freedom must include the ability to dominate nature". Patriarchal ideas of this 'domination' are largely what's got the planet in the state it's in in the first place.

Humans have to learn to work with nature. We're part of it. Processes like factory farming are environmentally detrimental and wasteful of resources. John's ideas about domination include the irrigation of land. Desert areas that need irrigation are usually areas where Western farming systems have been adapted over traditional 3rd World practices, and are what causes 'drought' in the first place.

In some areas peasants are learning to replant forest, which is the best way to irrigate land. Tree roots bind soil that has been desertified, and bring water below the surface closer to a level which helps plant regeneration. Forest farming with food-bearing trees makes more sense than stripping land bare with Western animal-based methods, and then frantically trying to repair the damage only to repeat mistakes again. Thus, 'send a cow to Ethiopia' type schemes only exacerbate problems.

STATE CONTROL

John also argues for 'state control' (vile phrase) of production processes. I would like

to see people taking control of their own lives. Better to dig an allotment than work in a factory all day. People who grow their own food need less money, as they meet more of their own needs. Also we can't wait for some fantasy Nirvana to arrive. If people don't wipe their asses on recycled paper now, we soon won't have a planet left to worry about.

John's arguments are characteristic of all non-anarchists. People don't need to delegate their lives to others, to the state. Don't give your life away!

FEDERATION OF WORKERS

Bakunin at The Hague in 1872 said "We want social and economic equality through the abolition of the state and all that passes by the name of law (which in our view is a permanent negation of human rights). We want the reconstruction of society to be achieved not from above downwards by 'authority', nor by socialist officials, but from below upwards by the free federation of all kinds of workers, liberated from the yoke of the state."

I don't want a socialist or any other 'state'. I want to see people take control of their own lives. Anarchism and not 'socialism' is the quickest route to human and animal liberation.

ANGIE HERTAG
BRIDGWATER

Militant

Solidarity price £1

The Marxist Paper for Labour and Youth

40p

THE PAPER
THAT FIGHTS
THE POLL TAX



An open letter to Militant about the fight against the Poll Tax.

A MILITANT RALLY?

The All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation Conference (December 1990) was fixed by Militant. Lengthy debates on Beating the Bailiffs and long statements by Tommy Sheridan and other Militant people were used to reduce the time taken for discussion of the new situation resulting from the end of Thatcher. The anti-poll tax campaign is the largest spontaneous movement of the working class for many years. It has followed up the miners' strike with important local organisations and initiatives. It continues a long tradition of such movements and Marxists do not have the duty of 'controlling' or dominating by organisational means. Commenting on the Marxist view on the nature of a workers' party Trotsky made the following point:

...the Communist International has from its very inception defended the real and living independence of the trade unions, in the spirit of Marxism. (1)

This was when the Communist International (CI) was a revolutionary movement. Trotsky throughout the pamphlet stressed that the objective was not a crude takeover but that Communists should win the leadership by convincing union members of their policies and leadership. In the anti-poll tax movement Militant has used entirely different methods - crude devices to elect a Committee of 15 Militants and just one 30 supporter. The use of the Youth Rights Campaign to elect delegates to Manchester, when those delegates really represented nobody is just one example. It was the actions of a sect unwilling to recognise that the enormous strength of the spontaneous working class movement is vital to the seizure of power. That power needs political leadership not sectarian rulers. Political leadership means:

The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of the movement. (2)

This means that they work in the poll tax movement to develop it politically by winning its members to see the broader issues involved in the poll tax. Most especially these are the questions of the state. These questions come out in the state resistance to our demonstrations and our defence of the campaign, but most of all in issues like:

why are we, the working class, financing the capitalist state?

why is the capitalist state worldwide unable to fund vital services?

what is the connection between this question of state services and the general crisis of state capitalism?

If capitalism has created means of production that have outgrown the system, how can we defend services without overthrowing the system? (It seems to me that our purpose in fighting defensive battles is to help workers see that only a social revolution can ensure the continuation of any kind of social provision).

Bristol Magistrates Court.



Picture: PETE MAXEY

SECTARIANISM

The above questions all open the way for revolutionary answers. I see no sign of them being even addressed in Militant. What matters to Militant is sect building, founded on the assumption that the building of the sect is the construction of the revolutionary party. We in the pre-1985 WRP were involved in a similar fruitless exercise. The character of a sect is not determined by its size, nor by how often its paper appears. A sect will have a secret membership and be dominated by a small clique. Building the party for a sect is simply the recruitment of people to the secret society. The Marxist, by contrast, recognises that the working class is central and that that class must be able to see the 'party' at work. The Marxist movement is controlled from the bottom via genuine conferences, not from the top with the aid of rigged conferences.

A POLEMIC AGAINST MILITANT BY AN EXETER SOCIALIST

Replies to this polemic from
 Militant supporters are welcomed.

The constant financial pressure to keep the sect going is vital. It helps to keep you in the pocket of the sect and unable to have any independent existence. It also helps you to limit your focus to the organisation and its paper, and to minimise the independent working class movement. The extreme secrecy of Militant is far beyond what is required for work inside the Labour party. It is useful for a sectarian leadership to control the flock. Marx had us in the old WRP and you in Militant sucked in 1971.

The development of socialist sectarianism and that of the real working class movement always stand in inverse ratio to each other. Sects are justified (historically) so long as the working class is not yet ripe for an independent historical movement. As soon as it has attained this maturity all sects are essentially reactionary. (3)

STALINISED 'TROTSKYISM'

With the betrayals of social democracy, from 1914, and the rise of Stalinism, now poisonous bureaucracies have tried to strangle the working class movement. We know that they imposed reactionary policies, but more important is control of the working class movement. Stalinism has been the main machine of destruction of a lively independent class, as Trotsky and others have so well documented. Today the stalinist machine is shattered. In the anti-poll tax movement we have the Militant machine instead. A smaller machine, without the prestige and funding of a state, but a machine none the less.

It is interesting that the exchange of letters between the Militant leaders of the All Britain Federation and the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign (TSDC) shows the stalinist side of Militant. A few examples will make the point:

1 The use of quilt by association by linking the TSDC with racist abuse and with the pamphlet *The Battle of Trafalgar*. This was despite the fact that there was no evidence that TSDC was involved in racist abuse and the fact that the pamphlet itself includes a disclaimer saying that the TSDC

was not involved in writing, producing and distributing the pamphlet.

2 The use of a quotation from the Morning Star saying that the movement should keep away from anarchists like Class War and that the use of provocateurs by the ruling class was not new. The Stalinists always used to accuse us Trotskyists of being provocateurs, and now a so-called Trotskyist group is quoting the stalinist Morning Star against the anarchists. I, as a Trotskyist, have much more in common with anarchists than I do with stalinists - how about you? The heavy implication that Class War and like groups

are state agents was dealt with by denials from the platform in Manchester. It was left as an implication, no doubt to stop Militant members treating their critics seriously. Internal solidarity at the expense of truth!

I agree with Lenin, Luxemburg and many others that anarchism develops because the official labour movement is dominated by the dead hand of bureaucracy. In response to this, many fighters (mostly young) of independent spirit turn to the opposite extreme. The answer to the anarchists is not a bureaucratised movement and ludicrous allegations, but a living Trotskyist movement.

Militant Solidarity price £1
The Marxist Party for Labour and Youth 40

Solidarity price \$

The Marxist Paper for Labour and Youth

49

ISSUE NO. 11 MAY

Poll tax can be beaten

Scotland stops the bailiffs

"A MASSIVE victory for the poll-tax busters," said the local radio. Tayside anti-poll tax federation stopped what was supposed to be Tayside's first polling, the evil operation where they value your property so that they can sell it.

The Labour council sent sheriff officers (bailiffs) to the home of Valerie Thompson, a single parent on income support. She refused to pay a £50 fine for not registering for the poll tax. She has resisted and has two payment books to prove it!

It was only at 11:00 on the Moody night that I was able to contact the anti poll tax union (APTU). The sheriff's officers were due the next day. They'd threatened to force entry if I didn't let them in. I was in a panic.

I couldn't believe all these total strangers rallying round to help me. At 2:00pm the house was nearly full. There was a steady stream of people coming in, and the housing scheme...

All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation
Trade Union Conference
 Saturday 23 June, Central Hall, Remshaw Street,
 Liverpool. Starts 11.00am
 For a delegation form, write to the Federation at:
 PO Box 764, London E5 9SX

■ **MARTIN LLOYD** £10.168
has been voted in the last
seven days, taking our fight-
ing fund for the last two
months to £22,551.

Continued on page 2

Only Trotskyism can develop the spontaneous movement into a revolutionary one and for that it needs genuine leadership, not stalinist lies.

3 Blaming the critics within the movement for the actions of the police - the problem of the march to Brixton prison on October 20th was not the demonstrators but the police.

MILITANT & PARLIAMENTARY REFORMISM

Another vital question is the Parliamentary road to socialism. Militant, and Ted Grant in particular, have supported this reformist policy, the latter in a pamphlet called 'British Perspectives - November 1985: A Supplement to 'Capitalism at an Impasse' January 1985. Ted Grant, Towards the end Grant tells us that 'Marxists will be the most untiring and best workers for the election of a Labour government...'. It goes on to suggest that Marxists will fight for an 8 hour day, 4 day week and a minimum wage. Then it says that we must nationalise the 200 monopolies under workers control and management. The point I really object to comes shortly after that:

Side by side with the trade unions and Labour Party workers they (the Marxists) would demand the programme should be implemented. If it cannot be carried out under this system then emergency measures - including an Enabling Act should be passed in Parliament - in order to transform society.

There it is, plain as can be. This reformism is, I believe, sometimes denied by Militant supporters, by saying that it is some kind of 'transitional demand' and that, therefore, it is not really meant literally. Offering your supporters reformism is not and never was part of the Transitional Programme (TP). The TP is a programme of action for a world revolutionary party. The call within it for a 'Workers & Farmers' Government' is not a pre-dated call for Neil Kinnock to go to see Queen Elizabeth. Kinnock has no intention of breaking with the capitalist class and he has made this point so crystal clear that nobody has the slightest doubts on that score. The point of an Enabling Act is to place more power in the hands of a government based on Parliament: our purpose is to ensure the quickest removal of power from the hands of a bourgeois Parliament. Workers' own organs of power are needed to seize power and destroy the capitalist state. Any proposal which adds credibility to bourgeois

democracy is fundamentally wrong. It is worse to suggest that any government rooted in Parliament should take on authoritarian powers.

THE OLD LABOUR PARTY IS.....DEAD

Social democracy has degenerated massively since the TP was written and especially since World War 2. It is not offering a peaceful road to socialism, but is openly defending capitalism. It is not supporting workers' own organisations, rather it plans to keep up the assault on the unions. Not only has its policy become more explicitly pro-capitalist (it always was pro-capitalist) in fact, its membership has died away. From over a million in 1962-3 it is down to around 300,000 today. To claim, as Ted Grant does, that 'the masses will turn again, again and again to their traditional organisations, the trade unions and the Labour party' is to chase a myth. It is untrue and amounts to a dead dogma, not living reality. Even in the darkest crisis for the Tames workers have offered Labour their votes but nothing else. The old Labour Party is just about dead.

The sharp move to the right under Kinnock is a qualitative change which has pushed the lefts out of all positions of influence and power. This is why so many lefts are turning their backs on Labour. There will, no doubt, be pockets of resistance, but that is all. The slogan of 'Labour to power on a socialist programme' is not only dishonest but useless. No one but the Militant has the slightest belief in it as any kind of possibility. Ancient slogans can become today's dead dogmas.

Militant seems intent on pressing the myth of some golden socialist age in Labour's past '...the fundamental aim of the industrial unions, and of the Labour Party of transforming society...' as Ted Grant put it in British Perspectives - November 1985: a supplement to 'Capitalism at an Impasse' January 1985. The Labour Party was in fact formed by an alliance of socialist groups and the unions and it did not even take on the words of socialism until 1918. From then it failed utterly to take any steps whatsoever towards the construction of a socialist society. The ideology of Labour excludes this, the 'parliamentary' and 'peaceful' roads to socialism impose passivity on the living workers' movement.

The myth of Labour's golden socialist past is useful for Militant in that it helps to give the impression that deep burial in the Labour Party is the true mark of Trotskyism.

The whole question of the parliamentary road is tied into acceptance of the capitalist state. When Steve Nally talked about 'naming names' it may have been hastily and it may be that more sophisticated defenders of Militant would not have made such an 'error'. As far as I can tell no names were actually given to the police. The key question is why Nally could find it even possible to suggest helping the police prosecute demonstrators. The answer is because talk of the parliamentary road and of the police as 'workers in uniform' has undermined the marxist understanding of the state to the point that class lines can be crossed. As significant is the fact that although Nally admits he said it, the official line is to refuse to make any such statement. The 'image' of the group comes before the plain truth (sect loyalty before honesty to the working class).

At the Anti-Poll Tax conference Militant was reduced to crude oversimplification, saying that Thatcher's defeat was the result of the anti-poll tax movement and in particular the 'People's March'. This has the effect of preventing your supporters thinking through the real state of capitalism, and in particular the way in which the ruling class is trying to deal with its weakened position in relation to its European, Japanese and American rivals. I am not saying that our movement has had no impact, rather that a vigorous labour and trade union movement could have done to Thatcher what the miners did to Heath. We were a factor, but there is no evidence to show that working class strength was decisive in this contest. As to the People's March, I am sure that only Militant supporters think it brought down Thatcher, no serious commentator has even hinted at it.

No doubt the immediate reason for an up-beat assessment is to inspire the supporters. We in the WRP think that supporters need clarity not cheap triumphalism. That is because we think that the working class has within it the ability to destroy capitalism, and what is needed is leadership, not domination - we aim to build a revolutionary party, you are participating in a moderately successful semi-religious sect.

I look forward to your reply. Comradely greetings.

GEOFF BARR
NATHE, EXETER APTU, WRP/Workers Press

SOMERSET CLARION

SOCIALIST JOURNAL OF THE SOMERSET COMMUNITY DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

This issue typed by G. Burrows
Printed by Economic Printing Co.(TU).

NOTICE BOARD

The Somerset Clarion
4 Gordon Terrace, Bridgwater, Somerset.
Editor: Dave Chapple.

Subscriptions; 6 issues of the Somerset Clarion costs £4 post free.

Membership; You can join the Somerset Community Defence Campaign,
Wherever you live, for £2 if you are waged, £1 if unwaged.

You can become a special subscribing member for £5.

Selling the Clarion; we urgently need people all over the South West
to have a go at selling the Clarion on a regular basis.
This can be money up front, or sale or return. How about it?

The Plymouth Clarion is a sister project just underway in south Devon.
Anyone interested in helping please contact Jeff Baxter
c/o 24 St Johns Rd, Cattedown, Plymouth, Devon.

The Somerset Community Defence Campaign, publishers of the Clarion, is
an independent socialist organisation which meets every month to plan
the next issue of the Clarion and discuss political events. Why not
come along? Our meetings are usually informal and friendly.

Next meeting of the SDC/Somerset Clarion is 2.30pm, Sunday 24th Feb.,
at Unity House, Dampiet St, in the centre of Bridgwater. This is the
Bridgwater Labour Club, and visitors arriving early are welcome to
share a drink and /or food there with us first; we will sign you in.

Dont forget to send us your articles, letters, cartoons and photographs.
Dave Chapple, Editor 1991/2.



CHRISTOPHER JONES

Chancellor's Farm, at Priddy, in the Mendip Hills, Somerset, an 86-acre farm which has hardly altered since the seventeenth century. Its lease has recently been acquired by the Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation, which is now appealing for £70,000 to conserve the farm for the future, writes Joanna Gibbon.

The farm's previous tenant, who retired in 1988 at the age of 82, lived there all his life with his two spinster sisters. The fields

have been tended in a traditional way and no herbicide, pesticide or artificial fertiliser used: with the result that over 150 species of grassland wildflowers - including pignut, betony, yellow rattle, catsear, knapweed, fragrant orchid and autumn crocus - grow throughout the spring and summer. A marshy area encourages water-loving plants such as marsh marigolds, water mint, reed canary grass and ragged robin. The farmhouse and buildings, parts

of which date from the fifteenth century, have never had electricity, a telephone, an indoor lavatory, an access track or running water.

The trust intends to make the farm its centre for Northern Somerset while at the same time continuing to manage it in a traditional manner. The trust's flock of Beulah ewes will run on the grassland but a policy of late haymaking and grazing will allow the wildflowers to seed and flourish.

The farmhouse will be home to the trust's warden, as well as four graduate volunteers who want practical experience in conservation. Small groups of interested individuals will be allowed to visit the farm when an education display has been created in one of the barns. For further information, contact Roger Martin, Director, The Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation, Fyne Court, Broomfield, Bridgwater, Somerset TA2 2EQ, telephone 0823 451587.

SOMERSET CLARION

A SOCIALIST JOURNAL
FOR THE SOUTHWEST

JUNE/JULY 1992

50p

T/SOR/4/1/183



Unemployed and ex-soldiers struggles
in Bristol after World War I

Labour's 4th Election Defeat

The defeat of the Labour party in the 1992 general election is a turning point in class politics. The fact that Labour could not even reduce the Conservative majority to a 'hung parliament' shows that it is a spent force. This may sound unnecessarily damning of the Labour Party, but let's analyse the facts.

The Conservative government has intensified the effects of the world recession in Britain. Homelessness is at its highest level since the 1930s. Old people are being reduced to relying on charities like the Paddy Appeal. The poll tax was a political disaster, to put it mildly. The Tory party election campaign was abysmal, unlike the very professional Labour Party election campaign. So if Labour could not win under these circumstances, they never can.

REASONS

Nail 'loser' Kinnock's project was to make the Labour party acceptable to the affluent middle class. Labour showed itself to be a respectable, acceptable party by jailing more poll tax prisoners than the Tory and Liberal Democrat councils put together. This betrayal of the working class was supposed to be justified by the extra middle class voters Labour would attract. Labour also assumed that affluent middle class people would not mind paying an extra 10% income tax to fund Britain's social recovery. In reality, the middle class put their own selfish tax cuts above considerations of homelessness and pensioners.

Labour lost working class voters by trying to appeal to the middle class. This was bound to fail as the middle class are anti-working class, as explained in the 'Class War' magazine, 'The Heavy Stuff', issue 3. Policemen, army officers, teachers and civil servants are predominantly middle class and enforce ruling class ideology on the working class. There may be a few socially aware middle class people, but they are the exception to the rule. The middle class are scum! They are our class

enemy as shown by their lack of consideration for the homeless.

LIB/LAB ALLIANCE

The middle class hatred of the working class means that a Labour and Liberal Democrat alliance would not get elected either. Liberal Democrat voters are middle class and so would vote Conservative, rather than for a Lib/Lab coalition.

The black Tory candidate in Cheltenham was probably defeated due to Tory racists tactically voting Liberal Democrat. So these bigots would be hardly likely to support a coalition government that included the Labour party.

THE ENEMY WITHIN

In spite of the middle class, Labour would still have won if all the working class had voted Labour. The working class are still the biggest class, even if many of them do claim to be middle class. Therefore, many working class people voted for their class enemy, the Conservative Party.

Working class Tories are more contemptible than the rich, because at least the rich have a vested interest in voting Tory. Working class Tories are class traitors! They are the enemy within and should be treated as such. Shop stewards should make a note of workers who supported the Conservatives. Then, when redundancies are announced, they should make sure the Tories are sacked, as they obviously think that life on the dole is a barrel of laughs.

DIRECT ACTION

It is now obvious that the Labour Party cannot win an election, even with the Liberal Democrats. This is due to the combination of class traitors within the working class and the anti-working class mentality of the middle class. Therefore, the class war will be fought on the streets, not in parliament.

President J.F. Kennedy said something like: "When peaceful change is impossible, violence is inevitable." Too fucking right!!!

STEVE HIPPISEY
CLASS WAR FEDERATION
COMMUNITY DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

Socialism or Labourism?

"How should socialists relate to the Labour party?" is a question which comes up time and again.

Clause Four of the Labour Party constitution talks about workers' control and bringing the means of producing wealth into common ownership. It is a socialist statement of aims, but the Labour Party was not in the past a socialist party, is not a socialist party and never will be a socialist party (and the same goes for most so-called socialist parties, which would be better described as social democratic). It would clarify the situation for socialists if the Labour Party were to abandon Clause Four.

WHAT IS IT?

So, if the Labour party is not a socialist party, what is it? It is a laborist party, i.e. it arose out of the Labour movement and maintains links with trade unions. As such, it plays an important role in representing working people in parliament. However, like the trade union hierarchy it has a vested interest in maintaining the capitalist system. Although the party does valuable work in defending the N.I.S., providing social security, providing decent education for all and so on, its aims are ultimately at odds with those of socialists.

It is sometimes argued that it would be just as effective to support the Conservative Party as the Labour Party. The argument being that the Conservatives can assist in the destruction of capitalism by giving it free rein, so that it collapses under its own contradictions. But millions of people are going to get hurt in the process. So, the argument for supporting the Labour Party is to alleviate some of the excesses of capitalism, even if it prolongs it.

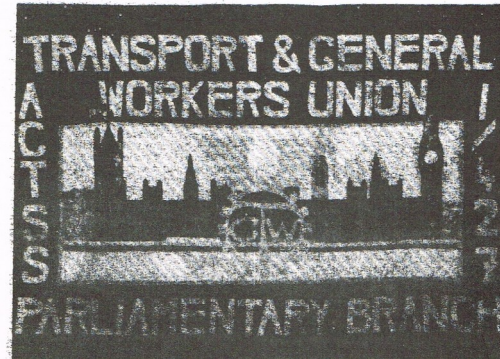
LABORIST OR SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC?

Nonetheless, most socialists will wish to support the Labour Party, just as they wish to support the trade unions. However, there are strong factions within both the Labour Party and the unions, agged on by the media, who wish to change the party from a laborist party to a social democratic party. Socialists within the Labour Party will probably wish to see it remain laborist and not become merely social democratic. They will argue for the links between the two wings of the Labour party to be strengthened, not weakened.

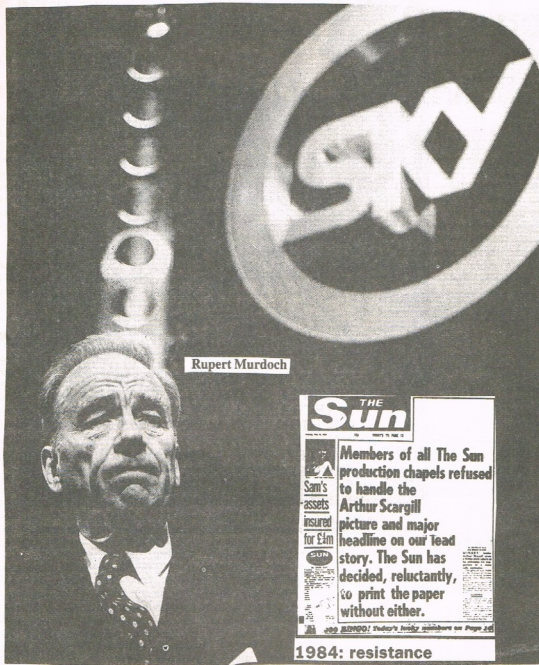
It is possible to be both a socialist and a laborist, but laborism stops short of socialism, which requires the overthrow of capitalism, and that is something which non-socialist laborists (the majority) do not desire.

BOB CRAIG
WESTON SUPER MARE LABOUR PARTYCHAIR,
WOODSPRING TRADES COUNCIL

The editor welcomes further contributions on this topic.



Sectarianism Vs Democracy



Rupert Murdoch

THE Sun
 Members of all The Sun production chapels refused to handle the Arthur Scargill picture and major headline on our lead story. The Sun has decided, reluctantly, to print the paper without either.

1984: resistance

The word 'sectarian' itself, by dictionary definition, implies denomination and adherents to a principle or school of thought. Not only does this apply to religious parties, but also to rightist and leftist politics. Sectarianism also exists in the rich tapestry of our society: pre-hunt, anti-hunt; the consumption of meat or vegetarianism; passivism or aggression, and so on.

The word 'democracy', by dictionary definition, implies government by the people or, if you look deeper, means a state of peoples in which this prevails.

When I reflect on the past misrule of our country, I understand that the Tories are more sectarian than I first thought. History shows us that if we pay attention to what has happened in the past, society should logically be able to model a better future. Somehow, this is not so.

Rightist sectarians tend to ignore the past and future and aim to bring progression to a halt. One or two minutes thinking about media control, its brainwashing effects on the proletariat is stunning. Real political facts are erased and the tabloids filled with stories about shagging vicars, spittires on the moon, adverbs and trumped-up stories about eggs being bad for your health.



1986: union busting



1986: trivia

SECTARIAN MYTHS

Our society is riddled with sectarian myths. To start with, workers and their demands for higher wages are to blame for inflation and joblessness. Bullshit! Lower wages restrict consumption and hence hobble producers. Result--unemployment. This leads to an example of the myth that unemployed people are useless, lazy bastards who don't want to work. (Yet another way of putting up a smoke screen in an attempt to veil the roots of economic woe). Only thought and reflection away from the media and the myths can bring understanding and progressive thinking, not sectarian control.

DEMOCRACY IS EXTINGUISHED

Democracy, on the other hand, is extinct in our country. This applies to all the main political parties. We saw that after the demise of Thatcher, Major was installed by a few and not the people. The Labour Party leadership battle following the demise of Kinnock looks set to ignore the principles of democracy also. Dennis Skinner and Tony Benn have rightly called for a full debate prior to a leadership ballot. Ignored. Maybe the Labour Party's school of thought is as totalitarian as the government's! To reinforce this philosophy, why are the trades councils and trade unions, the traditional right arm of the working class movement being put down by the party that traditionally based its foundations on the struggles of the working class?

In summary, it is not enough for leftists to wait in anticipation of change, progression does not come cheap. No matter how battered and exhausted revolutionaries and activists feel, we must battle on. Healthy articles in magazines like the Clarion, public education through leafletting and workplace organisation will help to achieve our goal--an end to right-wing sectarianism, the restoration of true and real democracy and the restoration of 'power to the people.'

Andy Dale
 Bridgwater NUT
 Bridgwater 'Employed Workers' Group.



The Old Clarion

Seeing a copy of the Somerset Clarion the other day brought back some ancient memories.

In the early years of this country, my father used to cycle around the Somerset villages trying to sell copies of the Clarion and the lorry louts threw stones at him for his pains. The Clarion he was trying to sell was a national paper of the Socialist movement and presumably the Somerset Clarion is named after it.

Just how much things have changed since those days is exemplified by a slogan I heard him use—"Every man an acre and a cow." How naive that sounds today; like William Morris's 'News from Nowhere'; how absurdly utopian.

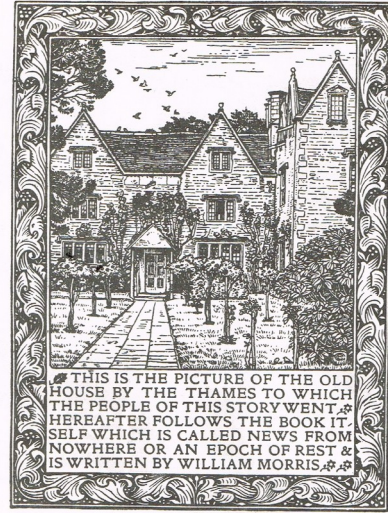
At that time, of course, he knew nothing of Marxism and Lenin was Vladimir Ilyich, an unknown Russian. He supported the early Labour Party because they proposed the common ownership of land. My father thought that, since the land was the source of all wealth, common ownership would mean an equal distribution of that wealth. Foolish fellow.

In later years he came to regard Labour politicians as traitors, particularly Ramsay MacDonald. He never came to terms with Marxism and he detested the centralised bureaucracy of the trade unions. In short he was what I suppose we would call a libertarian socialist.

As a young man, like many other sons, I knew better than he did. I saw the success of Marxism in conquering a third of the world. I studied dialectical materialism and saw the certainty it offered for the eventual victory of Communism over the entire world. I became chairman of the Bristol Branch of the C.P.G.B. The party had two members in the House and we aimed to field a hundred candidates in the next election.

Gradually though, it all turned sour. I suppose I retained some of my father's

One of the Clarion 'vans' which took socialism to the streets.



THIS IS THE PICTURE OF THE OLD HOUSE BY THE THAMES TO WHICH THE PEOPLE OF THIS STORY WENT. HEREFTER FOLLOWS THE BOOK ITSELF WHICH IS CALLED NEWS FROM NOWHERE OR AN EPOCH OF REST & IS WRITTEN BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

The frontpiece from the 1890 edition of Morris' *News from Nowhere*

naivety. I thought we were all working together for the common good, but the intrigues of some of the comrades made old Machiavelli look like an amateur. They didn't seem to have much to do with comradeship.

Then I started reading outside Party literature and began to question the infallibility of dialectical materialism. It seemed to me that at its core was a premise that one had to accept without evidence, rather like the divine truth of religion.

It came as no surprise to me that such a house of cards should suddenly collapse.

I won't bore you by describing the long road by which I came home, literally and figuratively. Sufficient to say that I feel closer to my father than I ever did.

Reading the articles in the Somerset Clarion, I think, if he could get through the jargon, he would be in sympathy with some of them at least.

Marx wrote a very useful analysis of capitalist economics, but Marxism as a programme for action was an aberration on the road to Socialism. In my old age I tend to view current libertarian movements with a somewhat jaundiced and disillusioned eye, but I have learned one thing about human affairs: one never knows what may happen. Historical necessity is an illusion. Having got rid of the aberration, there is always a possibility that there may be a resurgence in my father's Socialism.

GORDON BURFOOT
WELLS

Can't Pay - Won't pay

Wendy Vincent vs Bath Magistrates

Taunton Deane Poll Tax reports

Even though I had explained to the Bath Magistrates way back in November 1990 that I was a non-earning housewife, a liability order was made against me, and, of course, Messrs. Roach & Co. and another firm, Griley & Co. from Wales, visited me in the hope that they would gain access to my home to try to distrain my goods and furniture.

However, they were unsuccessful and so a court bailiff paid a visit on the 11th March 1992 with a warrant for my committal and I telephoned the Wansdyke Council Recovery Officer to explain that it was impossible for me to appear by ten o'clock on the 11th April because there were no buses from Chew Magna to Bath. However, she said that as I had been able to get to court before (when my liability was granted), I must attend court again. So I set off early to cycle the fifteen miles. I had prepared myself for the worst, and in case of my committal, took along my night clothes, toothbrush and comb, because there was no way I was going to pay £159.52 plus £25.50 costs! I was extremely heartened to see the Bath Anti-Poll Tax banner to greet me when I arrived, together with members of the Bristol Anti-Poll Tax Union, Taunton Deane, Taunton and Midsomer Norton Coalition Against the Poll Tax groups (not forgetting my husband from the Chew Valley A.P.T.U. of two members!). They all had their photographs taken by members of the press, and Mr. Steve Hayward of the Bath office of the Western Daily Press, who had promised to be present, interviewed me as though I was some celebrity waiting to be sent down!

INNER STRENGTH

When my time came to appear in the box, I felt an inner strength which I had not felt before and with my friend Diane standing alongside me I felt confident and read out my statement thus:

"I gave up paid employment 32 years ago to raise a family of two children, since when I have been a non-earning housewife. I have no income or savings and needed none until the introduction of the poll tax. The only cash handed to me is for food and other household goods for my family of four. Any clothes needed by me are paid for by my husband as gifts from him."

The two male magistrates asked if my husband was employed and I replied 'yes' saying he was in insurance; then they asked if my children were employed and once again I replied 'yes' adding that any money for their keep was given directly to their father. They then went on to deliberate, and I thought to myself, 'this is it!' When the magistrates returned and immediately said that my debt had been remitted I could hardly believe it, but when a cheer broke out from the gallery and my friends were congratulating me I realised that I was not going to Pucklechurch or some police cell somewhere.

DON'T PAY

It was good to read in the Somerset Guardian that another housewife, Midsomer Norton had also had her arrears of £208 and costs written off, and in fact the magistrates had wiped off over £2,000 in all that day. I said in my statement that the position of housewives should have been taken into account right from the start, not two years into the poll tax, and that other housewives should come forward and put their case to the court, not just pay up when they can't afford to pay.

WENDY VINCENT



Wendy Vincent

Court quashes poll tax rebel's bill

Steve Heywood
LEADING anti-poll tax campaigner Wendy Vincent was celebrating last night after magistrates wiped out a £359 community charge bill.

The 55-year-old mother-of-two from Chew Magna feared she would be sent to prison for not paying Wansdyke district council.

Mrs Vincent, of Avon anti-poll tax union, was among 14 defaulters brought before Bath magistrates yesterday to explain why they had not paid.

She told the court that as a housewife she could not afford to pay the tax.

Magistrates decided to wipe out Mrs Vincent's £359.52 bill and a prosecution demand for £25.50 costs.

Nine other defaulters had their debts wiped out or reduced and the others had their cases adjourned.

W.D.P. 15.4.92.

Taunton

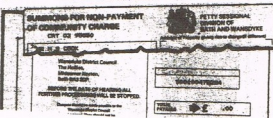
On Thursday 23rd April we went to Taunton Deane Magistrates Court to try and help people who were going to get liability orders for non-payment of the Poll Tax. Mrs Joyce Baker had to go. She's blind and has angina - she had her guide dog Naomi with her. Alan Debenham had to help her as naturally she couldn't see anything. She told the magistrates that she was a Cornish tinner and that she wasn't under the jurisdiction of Taunton Deane. She had her tinner's certificate with her but they didn't want to know. She said she didn't think she owed that much. She put up a good show but was still given a liability order.

She's a pensioner of 65 years with only her pension coming in. Next was Bas, and he said he couldn't pay, and unless they had an amnesty for the pensioners, the poor, the sick, the disabled, and those in dire straits he wouldn't pay his anyway - so he got a liability order. Next was Mike Langton. He said it was an unjust, unfair tax and that he couldn't pay and that he was £10 a week worse off this year. He also got a liability order. Then a man with two children, a wife not working, couldn't afford it - been out of work for a year. His name was Martin Yarde. The magistrates told him he had to pay his wife's costs as well as his own. He said how the hell could he pay all these costs when he couldn't even pay the costs. The magistrate warned him about language, or he would be in contempt of court!

Next, Paul Smith. He's got a smashed knee-cap, walks with a walking stick. He told the magistrate he had been paying what he could, but still got a liability order. As he was leaving the court he collapsed. The magistrates just sat there, not offering water or help. Bas and Alan Debenham helped him up on the chair to give witness. This was just like going back to barbaric days. They didn't even have the decency to call an ambulance. Then Tony Sarjeant came in, explained why he hadn't paid, and was charged £25 costs. Yet on his summons the costs were £20. He wanted to know why he had to pay £25 costs. The magistrates told him it was the court, so evidently he had to pay another £5 for attending court that day!

JEAN & BARRY DAVIES
TAUNTON DEANE APTU

WANSDYKE District Council, Avon, are setting a firm example in taking people to court for poll tax. Nigel Cook from Midsomer Norton paid his poll tax, but he got a summons anyway - for £0.00p. If you don't believe me, here it is.



Anti-Nazism or Anti-Fascism?

A Contribution to the Clarion Debate on Anti-Fascism

RACISM ON THE RISE

Racism is set to become the most explosive issue of the 1990s, not only in Britain but throughout Europe, as the Fortress sets its control on immigration, creates labels such as 'bogus asylum seekers' and establishes the agenda for the rise of Euro-racism. In Britain the opposition to this has taken the form of organisations like Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) and the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) who have chosen to pinpoint small sections of the far right, in particular the British National Party (BNP), as the main problem to be confronted. But the BNP do not exist in a political vacuum and to claim that they are mysteriously and spontaneously growing ignores the main problems: a racist consensus in Britain which unites both right and left on such issues as immigration controls and physical resistance to racist attacks.

THE RACIST STATE

The fact that legally the British state can deport countless immigrant workers, and that the police have the authority to attack and arrest black people at will (things that Tyndall, the BNP leader, can only dream of) shows that the major threat to blacks and Asians in Britain is the racist state. State immigration controls have the dual purpose of identifying black and Asian people as a problem and in doing so provides 'respectability' to racial violence. It is this 'respectable racism' which creates the climate where violent racist thugs can operate: thus it is imperative that we challenge the 'legitimate' wing of the racist consensus.

THE LESSONS OF HISTORY

The demonstration against the Tory Asylum Bill in January could have been used to launch a real anti-racist movement which took up the issues of immigration controls and state racism, but a few days before the demo the Anti-Nazi League was relaunched and so the emphasis was shifted away from the state onto a small and marginal group of goose-stepping boneheads.

The second coming of the ANL has given the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) an opportunity to take a trip down memory lane and restate the claim that they 'boast' the National Front in the 1970s. But the electoral support for the NF was based on their anti-immigration slogans such as 'one million unemployed, one million immigrants.' The ANL actually refused to take a position on immigration controls, preferring instead to court 'respectability' with its sparkling array of Labour politicians and vicars. The result was that Thatcher stole the NF's mantle and was swept to power on a wave of anti-immigrant statements.

The ANL has refused to learn the 'lessons of history' it speaks of, and to oppose immigration controls in the 1990s. Instead the ANL has employed the 'politics of deceit' by claiming that the BNP were standing 50 candidates in the general election although they knew this to be false. They argued that if fewer candidates stood then the ANL could claim it as a victory and if 50 did stand then it would vindicate their Nazi score tactics (see Searchlight, Feb. '92). More appallingly the ANL have initiated a post-cord writing campaign asking John Major to close down the BNP headquarters! Exaggerating the threat from a few fascists as a 'threat of fascism' and then calling for the state to ban the BNP is not only politically ludicrous but dangerous. Any call for state intervention only serves to strengthen the state's hand and ends up in measures to ban all 'provocative' demonstrations and invites repression which is more often exercised over the left than the right. The only way forward is an independent struggle against both the racist attacks of the state and the racist thugs.

NATIONALIST CONSENSUS

At the root of the resurgence of neo-fascism is racism and nationalism, and the consensus which equates workers' interests with those of their bosses, rather than with the exploited and oppressed. Racism is one of the most useful tools for creating divisions within the working class, and immigration controls foster and enhance this division.

The neo-fascists do not cause racism, nor are they responsible for any more than a small fraction of racist attacks. Obviously to those involved a boot in the face is as painful whether it is from a policeman or a bonehead. But the point which much of the left fail to grasp is that police attacks highlight the racist nature of the state which creates racist opinion, whereas fascist attacks are only a symptom of the problem. The need for a real anti-racist movement which would take on the political and ideological struggle against immigration controls and campaign against deportations, is more urgent than ever.

SELF-DEFENCE

Physical self-defence of black and Asian communities must be supported and assisted, and the rise in Fortress Europe sentiments must be opposed now before there is more blood on the streets. In this country the first step would be to identify the British state as the main enemy, and thus strike at the real root of racism.

BRITISH JUSTICE--WHOSE JUSTICE?

Representatives of the black and Asian communities called the 'March for Justice' in London last month, but the justice they want will not come from the British state no matter how many local authority police monitoring projects are set up. Appealing to the authorities for justice is dangerous as it fosters illusions that the state can play a progressive role in the anti-fascist struggle.

A few black cops, government grants for race relations and glossy equal opportunity statements are all just window dressing. Home Office harassment of immigrants, police criminalisation of black youth, prosecutions of Asian youth for defending themselves against racist attacks--this is the real face of the British state, an organised racist force which should be our main target. Until the left stops playing the 'Dunkirk-spirit' card of anti-Nazism then official British racism will continue to go unchallenged. Isn't it about time the left learned from the mistakes of its own history and stopped trying to repeat the past?

BRISTOL ANARCHIST WORKERS GROUP
c/o BM 6548, London WC1N 3XX

SOMERSET COMMUNITY DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

The Somerset Community Defence Campaign will meet monthly in 1992, and meetings are open to everyone who is interested in active socialist campaigning and organising. They are held at Unity House, Dampiet St., Bridgwater, at 2.30pm, on the first Sunday of each month. Ring 0278 450562 for details.

LOOKING BACK

From the Somerset Guardian and Radstock Observer, Friday, February 27, 1942

Struggle: Those who heard Mr Arthur Horner, president of the South Wales Miners' Federation, who addressed a well-attended meeting at the Victoria Hall, Radstock, left the meeting with no doubt in their minds as to what the duty of the British public should be in the present struggle.

He plainly told his audience that in this country at the present time there was no sense of crisis or any sense of proportion of the tremendous danger with which this country was faced.

He expressed faith in the statement of Russian leaders that there would be victory in 1942, but he urged that this depended on the Allies of Russia doing their part in the struggle.

He advised everyone going all out in the matter of production, and hoped the miners of the country and other workers would put everything into the common effort.

Revels: A return visit was paid to Midsomer Norton of Billy Fields and Kay Hutchings, and their Radio Revels.

On their former visit, nearly £30 was raised for Mrs Churchill's Aid to Russia Fund.

The artistes were Joan Andrews and Gordon Stewart, Sandy Moir, Scotland's yodelling accordionist.

Fighting the fascists

Morris Beckman writes:

JEFFREY Hamm (obituary, May 14) was the spark that ignited an explosion waiting to happen. It occurred the last Sunday evening in February 1946 when, with three other Jewish ex-servicemen, I drove to the top of Hampstead Heath for a quiet drink at Jack Straw's Castle.

My companions were an ex-paratrooper sergeant who had been wounded, taken prisoner and awarded the Military Medal at Arnhem, an ex-sergeant instructor of the Welsh Guards, a former RAF fighter pilot who held the DFC. I had been at sea for six years.

Alighting by the old pub we saw, for the first time, Jeffrey Hamm. He was speaking on a platform, surmounted by a large Union Jack and fronted by a board bearing the legend "The British League of Ex-Servicemen and Women".

We listened to a most vitriolic diatribe against the Jews (aliens in the post-war fascist newspeak) along the lines of, "While our brave boys were fighting the wrong war the cowardly aliens in our midst waxed fat in the black market..."

We had already become aware of the furtive emergence of the fascists, whose manifestations were racial daubings on walls and windows, fly-posting and provocative outdoor meetings. At that time one could be sickened by newsreel documentaries showing bulldozers in concentration camps shovelling mounds of bodies into limepits, and then later encountering fascist speakers saying things like, "Hitler was right. But not enough Jews were gassed." If an outraged listener hobbled, he would be arrested for causing a breach of the peace. Protected by the law, fascist speakers were getting away with murder.

Jewish ex-servicemen had approached MPs, their own Board of Deputies and local authorities, urging them to make illegal the obscenity of open fascism returned to London's streets. But in vain. Smouldering resentment was hardening into a determination to stop the fascists. But, how, without attacking them and breaking laws? It was frustrating and vexatious. We were mainly in our early twenties: many had seen action at the various sharp ends of the services and breaking laws was not to our taste. We balked at doing so. Until Hamm, that evening in Hampstead, pushed us into a decision.

Four young fascists stood protectively by his platform, selling their Britain Awake paper. Hamm's Jew-baiting ratched up a few notches, and we snapped. We attacked the platform and very quickly

downed three of the fascists, the platform and Hamm. Our paratrooper gave Hamm the first of many hammerings he was to receive over the next few years. But he was instrumental in our making the decision. If the authorities would not stop the fascists, we would, in our own way, regardless of consequences.

But word of mouth we convened a quick meeting. Forty-three ex-servicemen attended. They were told the intention was to create an organisation that would be devoted to launching an all-out assault on Mosley and his fascists until they were utterly destroyed. They were told it would be a no-quarter, no holding back, disciplined para-military operation. And that those who took part would risk injury and being jailed and that their civvy street careers would go on to the back burner until our aim was achieved. Those present were offered the option of ducking out with no hard feelings against them. Not a single one left the room.

The rest, as they say, is a footnote to history. Four years later, after having fought the fascists and utterly destroyed them in what was a little known but no Queensbury-Rule mini war, the 43 Group disbanded. Many fascists left the Union Movement. Some fascist leaders like McCleah and McGorray, ex-BUF leaders pre-war, turned their coats and spoke on 43 Group platforms. Hamm, an intelligent man, ambitious and a very experienced rasp-voiced orator, hung on to the very end. Racism was his life. He had to hate.

The 43 Group was completely apolitical. Its one aim was to smash fascism. It was not affiliated with any other party or association. Efforts to suborn us always failed.

I have written a book about the 43 Group, to be published later this year. After our first and only re-union in 1990 it was mooted that the campaign should be recorded, as it happened, wars and all. Even the elderly veterans who look back and wonder, "My God, did I actually do those things?" agreed. Hamm's era, like ours, ended in 1950. Alas, fascism, a euphemism for racism, never goes away.



Ruth Watchorn demonstrates her firefighting skills

First firewoman is a roaring success

By Chris Rundle

THE first woman to answer Somerset fire brigade's recruiting call has come through her 13-week training with flying colours.

Ruth Watchorn, aged 24, is now one of the lads in the watch at Taunton fire station — and yesterday she recommended the job to other women.

Ruth swapped a desk job with South Somerset district council to become the

county's first female firefighter.

Watch officer Peter Male said yesterday: "She has done very well indeed in the short time she has been with us."

Ruth is a county-class swimmer and an experienced rock-climber, both of which helped her meet the brigade's stringent fitness standards.

"I was looking for something which would challenge me physically and I've found it," she said.

Contributions to THE CLARION represent the writers' views, and not necessarily those of the CLARION or of the SOMERSET COMMUNITY DEFENCE CAMPAIGN. The aim of the Clarion is to be an open discussion journal for the labour movement. Please let us have YOUR views, ideas, and information

CAPITALIST ECONOMIC CONTRADICTIONS.

Contradictions facing world capitalism

Marx and Engels followed Hegel before them in seeing history as a process of social change where different forces or sections within society operated in opposition or contradiction to one another. These contradictions led both to crises in societies and to historical change as these crises were resolved. Crisis is a word that has been much used in recent years. The world is presently experiencing the third multi-national capitalist recession since the 1930s, the first two being in 1974 and 1981/82. Below are some of the contradictions that are facing the world.

For the punst, capitalist crisis is rooted in a crisis of profitability when living labour (the only source of surplus value) is expelled from the labour process by the competitive pressure between capitalist firms leading to a rise in the organic composition of capital (the ratio between dead and living labour) and a fall in the rate of profit.

This technical contradiction between the interests of individual capitalists and capitalism as a system has been the source of endless arguments between Marxists. A broader, more common sense contradiction is often described where each firm tries to pay its labour force less and less in order to cut costs and raise profits but each firm tries to produce more and more commodities to sell to the workers employed by other firms. Thus the system rests upon a contradictory argument on the role of labour, on the one hand to work infinitely hard for no money and on the other to buy and ever growing output of commodities.

Another key contradiction often cited is the conflict between the forces of production (in capitalism these are factories, technical knowhow and equipment) and the relations of production or how people relate to each other and the forces of production. In capitalism the relations of production are the class system (the ruling class owning the means of production and exploiting the proletariat who own nothing and have to sell their labour power to live). The forces of production are continually developing particularly under capitalism which artificially forces forward technical innovation through competition between firms. At some point the relations of production can become an obstacle (or fetter) to the full use or further development of the forces of production and then struggles ensue to change the relations of production. So in the present housing crisis we have thousands of homeless people sleeping rough, unemployed builders and many empty houses. The relations of production, the private ownership of houses and the private ownership of the house-building industry for profit prevent the obvious solution. Ultimately a limited change in the relations of production (legalised squatting or public sector building) will resolve the contradiction.

A key contradiction lies in the development in the means of communication. Broadcasting and mass travel have arisen from technical developments arising from war and capitalist competition between capitalist firms. In turn these developments have undermined the nation state, the key political institution of bourgeois capitalism. The internationalism of world trade, holidays abroad, mass emigration and satellite TV, of the World Cup and the Olympics has resulted.

Patriotism and Nationalism have been the key ideological weapon of the ruling classes to maintain the loyalty of the society they preside over. The threat to the nation state is a threat to their political authority. An international ruling class means an international proletariat. Three miners are already close to forming a world federation of mining unions which raises the three possibility of a world coal strike. Dig deep for the miners from the Donbas and Yorkshire to Dunsmuir and Mansfield to Kentucky and West Virginia to the South African Rand. At the same time the forces of concentration that oblige companies to become ever larger to remain competitive ensure that multi-nationals have broken out of the bounds of national control. An international ruling class is emerging of whom Robert Knoxell was an interesting example. These are the days of joint-ventures, multi stock-market portfolio investment, productive capacity in three continents and a world marketing strategy.

WILL BROWN M.S.F.

RED BANNER A MARXIST JOURNAL

This Marxist journal and discussion group has been set up by trade unionists in Bristol. The group meets regularly to discuss political and trade union issues from a wider perspective. Anyone interested in the Bristol group, or in setting one up in their own area, contact Dave Backwith, 35 Shaftesbury Avenue, Montpellier, Bristol BS6 5LT (tel 0272 413150).

JOURNALS, NEWSLETTERS & NOTICES RECEIVED

Red Banner no.3 Bristol Marxist Journal Recommended
Searchlight April 1992 Anti Fascist Journal.
Socialist Review May 1992 SMP Journal.
Marxism July '92 SMP Political Education Week/Program
'After the election' SMP pamphlet.
Green Anarchist No 29, plus T shirt/Book/pamphlet list.
Midlife Guardian Spring 1992 Journal of LACS.
Socialist Appeal no.2 Journal of Ex-Militant Tendency
comrades supporting Ted Grant.
Campaign Against Domestic Violence no.4 April 1992.
Relaunching 'Solidarity Network', paper by John Leing
and Mark Metcalf from East London.
TOM Solidarity Group Bulletin no.2.
Transport Worker no.3. Anarcho-syndicalist paper.
Earth First no.2 Medical Environmental Direct Action.
Exeter Flying Post April 1992 Local alternative paper.
Bridgewater International Review No.2 Local International Friendship Journal, with socialist input
Trade Union Mike no 7. Very good TU paper.

All available on loan from:

Dave Chapple
Somerset Clarion Library
4 Gordon Terrace
Bridwater, Somerset TA6 5JP
Tel. 0278 450562

Please enclose a donation for postage & packing

Boys don skirts in uniform row

SCHOOLBOYS gave teachers a shock yesterday when they turned up for lessons in skirts in protest at uniform rules. Five 16-year-olds from Somersvale school at Midsomer Norton bared their knees in support of female pupils who are barred from wearing trousers. The gender-bender rebellion, with several girls wearing slacks too, came after months of discussion over whether the uniform rules should be changed. Last night parents and headteacher Mr Alan Sedgely dismissed the protest as a teenage prank and said the youngsters were soon back in their normal attire. Mr Sedgely said the boys had changed into the girls' clothes after arriving at school and were spotted as they were going to lessons. After discussing the situation with staff they agreed to change back into their usual uniforms for afternoon classes. Mr Sedgely said school governors were considering whether girls should be allowed to wear trousers and pupils had been told the matter was under review.

School

"It seems the feedback did not reach some pupils and regrettably some of them jumped the gun. We explained the situation to them and they responded by appearing in school this afternoon in proper uniform. None of the pupils were disciplined although Mr Sedgely said there were some matters to be discussed on Monday.

W.D.P.
8-2-92.

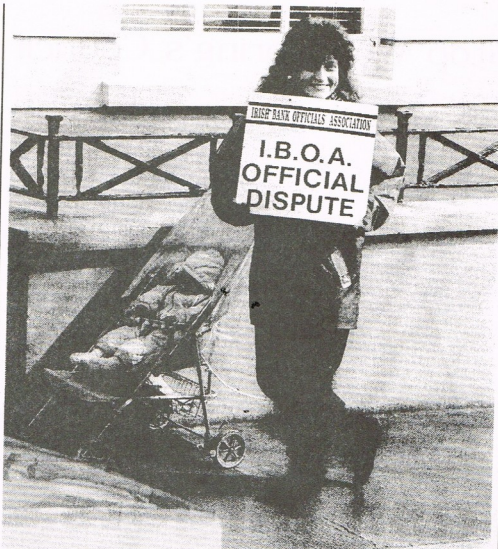
the IRISH post

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The Irish Post is a weekly newspaper whose readership is the Irish Community in Britain. Its news coverage is detailed, intelligent, and somewhat biased in favour of progressive, left wing, or trade union causes, as these photographs show. It is almost certainly the best weekly paper with a substantial circulation, and should be required reading for British left wingers eager to educate themselves in Irish politics. Order straight from news-agents.

Somerset Clarion Editor.



MOMENTARY RELIEF: The bank strike mounted in the Republic last week has proved especially bitter, with trade unionists alleging management intimidation and bank chiefs in turn accusing striking workers of intransigence.

Our photographer PAT MANTLE, however, captured a rare moment of humour on the picket lines outside Allied

Irish Bank in West Cork's Ballydehob, where Slobhan O'Brien combined picketing duties with temporary childcare for a friend.

The strike has hit all of the four main banking groups in Ireland — Allied Irish, Bank of Ireland, Ulster Bank and the National Irish bank, but has not at all affected British branches of Irish banks. 18-4-92




EASTER PARADE: Glasgow's Bridgeton Republicans' Flute Band led a 200-strong march from Gorbals to Queen's Park to mark the 76th Easter Rising anniversary. It was joined in the peaceful march by two other bands, the Pollok Republican and the James Connolly Memorial. Picture by TOMMY MAIN.

25/4/92

Stop Woodspring's Council house sell off!

IT IS YOUR HOME THEY WANT TO SELL!

Woodspring District Labour Party  Response to a proposal to sell off council houses to 'Woodspring Housing Association'

BEFORE YOU VOTE IN THE BALLOT TO SELL OFF YOUR HOME, THERE ARE SOME POINTS WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO CONSIDER AND SOME QUESTIONS WE THINK SHOULD BE ANSWERED

QUESTION

How can guarantees on future rent rises be honoured, if for instance staff salaries and other 'Housing Association' costs exceed the level of inflation?

... Rent Officers decide that 'Housing Association' rents should be increased?

(In Brighton, the Rent Officer increased one such rent by 72%)

NOTE 1 There is no guarantee that rents for new tenants will not be above the prevailing level of rents.

NOTE 2 'Service' charges may rise faster than rents.

QUESTION

Will written rules governing the 'Woodspring Housing Association' be sent to each individual tenant prior to the ballot? If not — WHY NOT?

QUESTION

If a tenant should leave a 'Housing Association' property, will it be offered again for rental — or would it be sold off — thus depleting the stock available for rent?

QUESTION

Where would you stand if your 'Housing Association' goes bankrupt?

QUESTION

Why do you think Woodspring Council are able to spend £300,000 on propaganda to boost the sell-off, whilst allocating only £10,000 to the provision of facilities for tenants to be properly consulted and informed?

NOTE 1 This £300,000 could have provided for an average rent reduction of £0.72 per week — or a Christmas bonus of £38.

NOTE 2 Woodspring Council has, in recent years, taken millions of pounds from housing accounts to fund other projects — no wonder housing funds are low!

QUESTION

Is the 'Housing Association' prepared to give any guarantee regarding the provision of new homes for rent?



Council Estate, Wrexall.

FACTS

Of sixteen councils who have already sold their tenants' homes to 'Housing Associations', fifteen revealed that most of the money so raised was used to keep down poll tax and to finance council borrowing, rather than investing in 'new' housing.

In three years, £650 million was raised by sell-offs, but only £75 million was re-invested in social housing — this produced just 1,500 homes — i.e. 500 per year.

Money received from sell-offs has been used to repay debts other than housing.

PROMISES

Woodspring Council has promised to hand over £18 million to the new 'Housing Association' — if it is formed.

This £18 million is almost the same amount as that already raised by council house sales. The Tory Government will not allow this £18 million to be spent on new housing.

This means that the 'Housing Association' has to borrow £83 million in order to buy your homes from the council — the council will then hand over the £18 million to the 'Housing Association'.

NOTE The £83 million which the council is set to gain from the proposed sell-off, represents assets built up by tenants over 70 years — it includes shops, garages on modern estates, as well as houses.

OUR POSITION

Whilst there are thousands on housing waiting lists, sleeping in cardboard boxes and housed in inappropriate and expensive bed and breakfast accommodation, we believe that the selling of existing council housing to an unaccountable 'Housing Association' is morally wrong — especially since 'Housing Associations' have no obligation, statutory or otherwise, to house the homeless.

We must, therefore, urge you to cast your vote to

VOTE NO!

Prepared by N. Graham & John Dwyer, Woodspring District Labour Party. Printed by Woodspring Press Ltd., 1, Woodspring Lane, Wood Spring, Wrexham.

Although Woodspring, in the main, has been a good landlord regarding maintenance and repairs, over recent years millions have been taken from housing accounts, going into general rate fund or to keep the Poll tax down. I have never heard a Housing Chairman or Director plead for this money to be kept for housing. It is obvious housing finances would be in a much better state, but for this plundering. Nevertheless, there is £17 million held from sales which central government will not allow the council to spend.

TRIED & TRUSTED TEAM

The new Housing Association will hardly be a wealthy, healthy child, with a £75 million debt to be paid back to the banks. Rents collected annually amount to £12 million, administration and repairs need to be deducted from this. There is, of course, a reliable workforce, which will be forced to go private in order to compete for maintenance work. A tried and trusted team will be broken up.

We should be telling the Tory government to let local councils spend the money already held. It would be madness for councils to sell off their golden assets to private concerns who could end up bankrupt.

COUNCILLOR BRIAN JENNINGS (LABOUR).

Woodspring District Council is spending £300,000 of Council tenants' money in order to persuade them to vote for a wholesale giveaway.

In 1974 the Council inherited the housing stock built up since the 1920s. Currently there are 8000 houses or flats, plus garages, several area offices and even rows of shops on modern estates. This job lot has been knocked down to a £75.1 million bargain sum — an average of £5000 per dwelling. Some of these houses are not the traditional council type. For example in Portishead some stone-built Victorian houses in prime positions would fetch well in excess of £1000 each.

WORTHY OFFICE

The hopeful Chief-Executive designate of the new Housing Association, the former Director of Housing for Woodspring, is at present taking life easy, in a rent-free office, provided, complete with Secretary, by the Council — salaries paid for by the poor tenants.

Of course the earlier houses in this area were built for a few hundred pounds, and are paid for by now. These houses are now subsidising the rents of the last units to be built. There is nothing wrong with that.

Unemployed and ex-soldiers' strug

Almost a year to the day the slaughter of the First World War ceased, on the 4th of November 1919 William Parry, a homeless discharged soldier, was dragged from Newton Bridge arches near Bath. That same day he died in hospital, having explained that he had crawled under the arch for shelter and lain there without food for 17 days.

Here was the suffering of the discharged rank and file at its most extreme. In many other cases soldiers were returning to unemployment and dole, and asking themselves if this was the truth behind Lloyd George's promise of a land fit for heroes.

In Bristol demobbed servicemen started organising against their unemployment. They were organising in a Britain wrecked by mutinies and strikes—even large sections of the Police were on strike. A number of mutinies on British soil saw the red flag raised and soldiers' councils formed; a Canadian mutiny in Wales began with the cry: 'Come on, you Bolsheviks!' Many British and Irish workers looked on enviously at the Russian Revolution. Derry had a massive riot, Belfast struck. In Gloucester gaol a Sinn Féin MP died on hunger strike.

In Bristol 200 soldiers from the White City camp marched on the Council House to demand an end to unfair punishments. The working class faced up to the state and saw it off; a march of hundreds of 'Red Flag' singing striking dockers surrounded the Council House and spread the strike to all Bristol's transport workers till the Home Office was wired and that same day freed a docker jailed for a month for stealing two fallen apples. This was just one local skirmish in an unprecedented working class offensive in Britain, assisted by the revolutionary wave sweeping through Europe after 1917.

In 1919 Britain was pregnant with revolutionary possibilities—an historical reality which has been systematically kept

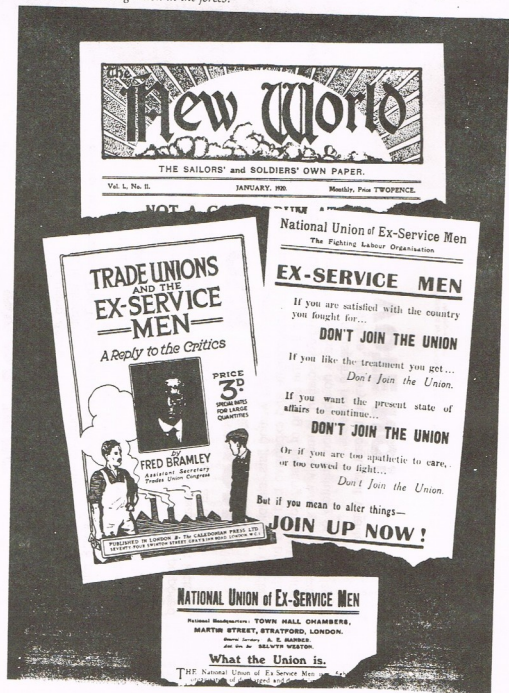
from us to sustain the myth 'It couldn't happen here'—and though Bristol was hardly the focus, an examination of the response of the Left here to the activities of ex-servicemen's mobilisations has a direct relevance to any socialist today who is serious about what to do to prepare for future revolutionary possibilities.

Branches of a number of ex-servicemen's organisations were set up in Bristol—including the fairly reactionary Comrades of the Great War, a British Federation, a National Federation and the leftish International Union of Ex-Servicemen. Most of their memberships were amalgamated under the auspices of a Grand Federal Council, based

The power of the printed word; some of the posters and propaganda produced during the period of the trades union agitation in the forces.

at 4 Colston St. with a small full-time staff. There was a rough and ready democracy enacted at regular open air meetings at the Ropewalk.

On a number of accounts small concessions were wrung from local authorities: an open air market for ex-servicemen to sell produce and the ex-servicemen were allowed to play a separate, heavily funded role in local Peace Celebrations (in Luton they were refused and they burnt down the Town Hall. Headline: 'Bolsheviks of Luton.'). Playing a critical role in making sure there was no Luton in Bristol was Alderman Frank Sheppard. His mayoralty in 1917 had been Labour's first in Bristol. A rank chauvinist during the war, he addressed recruitment



gles in Bristol after World War

meetings. His mayoralty was crucial in integrating the local Labour leadership into the establishment. The Western Daily Press praised his 'particular efforts to induce citizens to approach industrial problems in what may be termed reconstruction spirit. In response to these efforts spontaneously arose (the) desire by admirers to make a suitable gift.' These admirers were the President of the Chamber of Commerce, Hon. Sec. of the Rotary Club, etc. and the gift was presented by the Bishop.

Alderman Sheppard repaid his benefactors generously. Always present with the Tory Mayor in reception of various delegations of strikers and ex-servicemen during 1919, Sheppard was able to more credibly deflect anger. To the April 12th delegation he was able to claim, and be believed, The Lord Mayor and Council (both Tory, DB & PS) would do all they could, but it was the government that wanted ginger up (hear, hear!).

Within the Labour Party Sheppard's politics were opposed by the Independent Labour Party (ILP) whose most prominent local leader was Walter Ayles—they had opposed the war (though largely on pacifist grounds) and their object was 'to socially own and control the means of life.'

The relations between the ex-servicemen's organisations and the Labour and trade union movement were contradictory. Although many of the ex-servicemen were trade unionists and some of the rhetoric of their leaders ('those who made millions while thousands were dying shall be made to pay. They shall pay, they will pay!') was anti-ruling class, the dominant idea among their organisations that 'closed shop' unionisation was keeping them out of work was never properly challenged by the unions or by the left-wingers among the ex-servicemen.

This was exacerbated by the failure of either the Labour Party or the trade union leadership to offer anything to the unemployed ex-

The ex-servicemen's leadership offered no revolutionary alternative to Labour's electoralism despite their 'street' methods. Indeed, immediately after the Luton events were followed by copycat riots in Swindon, Coventry, Wolverhampton and Bilton, the Grand Federal Council called a meeting at the Ropewalk where Mr G.R. Hood called on members not to be discouraged, or prejudice their position by allowing discontent to lead them into doing anything drastic or premature. Jack Linton, a high-profile demagogue, diverted the anger of the members to 'the question of the employment of female labour on the trams.'

Even on the left of the Labour Party, Walter Ayles (president of Bristol Labour Party) pushed the idea in his pamphlet 'The Hell of Unemployment' that unemployment was due to a crisis of under-consumption—in other words, a crisis solvable by a redistribution of wealth—rather than a Marxist analysis of a crisis of over-production (more produced than can be sold at a profit) that is both recurring and inevitable in a capitalist economy. As R. Whitfield in his thesis 'The Labour Movement in Bristol 1910-1939' explained: 'there was nothing distinctively socialist about his under-consumptionist theory, for it was largely borrowed from the progressive liberal views of J.A. Hobson...unemployed delegates at the Trades Council conference answered his speech with the retort: 'It's the old Liberal gas!'

The local trade union bureaucracy were suspicious of the ex-servicemen whose tactics of street demonstrations to wring concessions out of the authorities and rough democracy were characterised by an unnerving volatility. As late as May 1920 the Bristol Miners' agent Charlie Gill told a May Day demo: 'It is time the Labour Party's policy on unemployment was clearly enunciated. Everybody has delayed on this question, including trade unionists, who have not realised the danger and taken too little notice of the unemployed...the Discharged Soldiers' Federation would do much good by taking their part in the Labour Movement...'

Before Driver-Wheeler Linton's divertissement could become a three act drama, a national strike on the railways erupted in September 1919 throwing the movement into a crisis of identity.

In Gillingham and Yarmouth ex-servicemen's organisations vowed to break the strike...was this the way the Bristol Council should go? As street fighters for the state and the Right (like the Freikorps in Germany)? Or should they mobilise themselves in solidarity with the railworkers as part of an anti-government militancy?

Forces ranged on either side of the question around Bristol prior to the railway strike took up defensive positions, more concerned about the threat of the other than the possibility for themselves. Earlier in

September, local trade unions had organised a demonstration to support the demobilised unemployed in Thornbury. Garmston of the dockers' union told the crowd that in Australia attempts were being made to use the soldiers to crush labour. The same was being done in the Motherland.

On the other side of the tracks an ex-servicemen's meeting in Portishead had been arranged by the great and good, doctors, clergy, etc. Between musical numbers Mr. E.H.C. Wethered told the audience most of the troubles have been through

Unemployed and ex-soldiers' struggles



Striking troops, January 1919; the catalyst for such action was objection to being sent to Russia by the Lloyd George government to aid the anti-Bolshevik forces in the Civil War.

Industrial grievances and irritations being exploited for political ends (hear, hear). The comparatively small number who sympathised with the doctrines of Lenin and Trotsky had inflamed men who were suffering from grievances to drive their revolutionary schemes. Everything which could be done to steady public opinion and bring about a better understanding between all classes should be done (applause).

In the event the Bristol leadership sat on the fence. The Bristol Comrades of the Great War resolved to "observe an attitude of strict neutrality." At a joint meeting with rail strikers at the Ropewalk the ex-servicemen expressed sympathy with the railwaymen in their trouble. Sadly, there is no record of any attempt to intervene in this meeting to win the ex-servicemen from their neutrality into solidarity action.

There were revolutionaries in Bristol capable of such an intervention, but they had no organisation. There was G.W. Brown, the Bristol Organising Secretary of the N.U.R.—a man who had defended Trotsky from the floor of the Labour Party Conference in 1918, heckling

Kerensky, a worker who had told his union conference in Plymouth: "There is a connection between Winston Churchill's attitude on the Russian question and his attitude as far as a railwaymen's strike is concerned. You are never going to get economic emancipation of the working classes except on the lines of international working class solidarity (loud cheers). We will no doubt be called Bolsheviks...but when that term is applied we are being honoured (cheers). They used to call us Socialists but nowadays to call us Socialists is to make us look too respectable (laughter). The only difference is that Bolshevism is Socialism with its working class clothes on" (laughter).

Yet it was still a full year away that Brown would resign his Labour seat on Bristol Council as a member of an independent revolutionary party—the Communist Party. In 1919 there were revolutionaries in Bristol but they had no organisation capable of organising the crucial work of intervention.

The one intervention that was made was a tragi-comic one from the Labour right. John Noble, who had only the month before chaired a Labour Party organised rally

for ex-servicemen in Keynham, and was President of the local British Federation of Demobilised Soldiers and Sailors, wired the Prime Minister from the address of the Grand Federal Council: "I and my 7,800 members back law and order up to the hilt. Support you all the way. Could help you more perhaps than you imagine." Despite his denial that he was calling for strike-breaking, he was expelled from the Grand Federal Council on the following day and a copy of the motion for his expulsion was sent to the strike committee (ASLEF/NUR).

Outside of the Council's aegis, in the Bristol Men's Club, there was an attempt to promote strike-breaking among ex-servicemen. At a meeting at the Dove and Crown Hotel in Brideswell Street, Brother Westlake said, "As they joined up in 1914 to save the country from their enemies without, now they ought to do their best to help the Government save the country from their enemies within. The attempt was defeated on the grounds that the Men's Club was a social one and could take no political stand and did not wish to confront trade unionists amongst its members.

The fence-sitting of the Grand Federal Council (established by the expulsion of Noble and the lack of any real challenge from left or right) was typical of a leadership which was losing its authority among its rank and file. By Spring 1920 the Bristol Times and Mirror could report: "The men are now wholly dissatisfied with recent actions of two or three of those to whom they have looked for guidance in connection with their organisation...there is an International Union of Ex-servicemen to which a number of the men have allied themselves."

Under pressure from the International Union, the Federal Council's leadership had organised a series of marches to workplaces where they demanded the replacement of women workers by ex-servicemen. These were well attended, but the 'old guard' leadership could not control their momentum.

MONDAY, APRIL 14 1919.

"WORK, NOT DOLES."

DEMONSTRATION IN BRISTOL.

DEPUTATION TO THE LORD MAYOR.

Over 4000 and demoralised men of Bristol held a demonstration on Saturday, and a deputation waited upon the Lord Mayor to seek his aid in procuring work for the thousands who are idle. The men assembled at Clifton Avenue and having been marshalled marched carrying banners bearing inscriptions such as "Work, not Dole!" and "Industry, not Idleness!" through the central streets headed by the British Federation Band.

party to lead the smashing of it) should read the press of 1919. Article after article extolled the virtues of 'service,' advertising the new attitude of employers to their servants--far from being the drudgery it has been depicted domestic service in the future will be more healthful and comfortable than factory life... (Bristol Times and Mirror)--and evoking sexual stereotypes against women in industry: 'Is Romance Dead Among Women Workers?'

A Women's Bureau was set up at Bristol's Employment Exchange and members of staff are going carefully through the list of women claiming benefit so as to ascertain how many have had previous experience in household work. To them places will be offered and applicants who refuse them will cease to receive unemployment benefit. At the Post Office married women will first be dispensed with as it is felt that their home duties should call for the whole of their time or at any rate the greater part. (Bristol Times & Mirror 16.2.19)

In the face of this onslaught--seeking to drive a wedge between female and male workers while delivering blows to working class women's strength in the workplace which would bruise the whole class--there was little principled resistance.

Women who had gained confidence through working in organised, unionised workplaces during the War were very hostile to any return to 'service'. Even in landwork very few young women have so far desired to give it up.

A large march to the offices of the Bristol Tramways Company on the 26th of April had no sooner heard Jack Linton announce that their delegation had met with failure than a voice behind the banner at the front of the march was heard to shout: "Let's have them off!" A crowd of some thousands ran down Clare Street towards the Tramways Centre fighting with police on the way. There began two days of attacks on the trams, windows were broken, trams were burnt. Clashes with police occurred in Old Market and St. Phillips.

On the 28th the Tramway bosses gave in and gave the women a week's notice. The male drivers threatened to strike, but they were given no lead. The left's position was appalling--it was the left International Union which a few days later would raise the red flag at the head of the ex-servicemen's May Day march which was aggressively leading the call for women to be sacked. Trade union leaders could declare, like Charlie Gill: "To put one person out of work in order to put another in is not going to solve the unemployment question." And Bristol Labour Party warned that the sacking would 'throw thousands of women into grave social as well as economic danger.' But no one suggested actually defending the women and fighting to keep their jobs.

The defense of women's employment had to be central to any workers' movement in 1919. The ruling class was orchestrating a centralised campaign to drive women workers into lower paid, isolated, unorganised employment or back into the home.

Government bodies were set up to promote 'service' as an attractive employment, dole payments to unemployed women were systematically reduced. The Ministry of Reconstruction's sub-committee on Training of Women tried to have 'service' recognised as a skilled occupation.

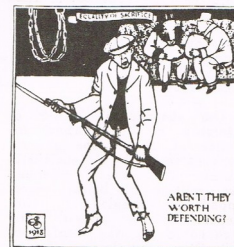
Anyone who doubts the centralisation of the capitalist state (or the necessity of a centralised--and democratic--

leadership for them was no Bristol's labour movement. Individual women might express their opposition to the onslaught, such as 'Two conductresses' who wrote to the Western Daily Press: "we should like the Comrades of the Great War to know that in most cases our responsibilities are equal to theirs, for we have others dependent on our earnings and homes to keep partly or entirely." These sentiments were echoed by Labour Party's women's organisations, but no leadership was forthcoming.

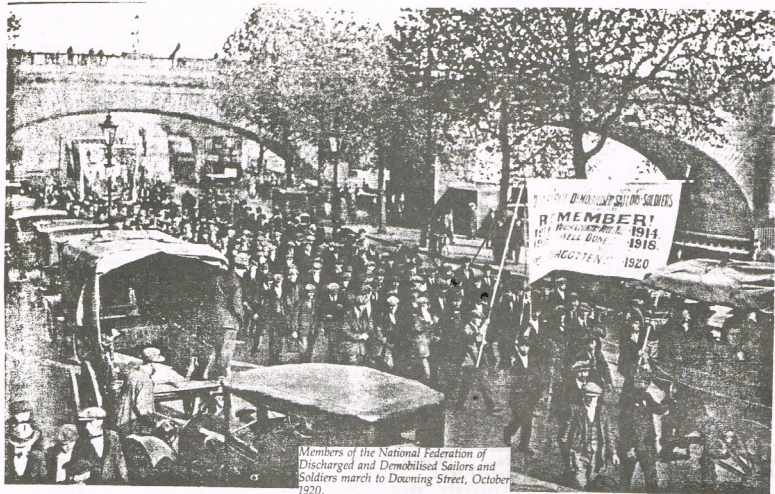
At a Round Table Conference, under the chairmanship of the Lord Mayor, C.T. Lewis of Bristol Trades Council protested at the indiscriminate dismissal of women (our emphasis) but did not dissent from a resolution put by Jack Linton for 'the reinstatement of adult male labour.' It was the manner rather than the substance of the attack on women to which the Trades Council objected.

On the Bristol Committee of the War Pensions Office--one of a plethora of joint boards which served to incorporate a bureaucratic layer of workers' representatives during the war--local trade union leaders Gill and Lawton objected to 'forcing all young women into domestic slavery.' But sentiments expressed in committee found no expression in action outside.

The women's local union leader H. Clark condemned 'ill-advised and cowardly action against defenceless women' but went on to reveal that their own United Vehicle Workers Union had been



Anti-capitalist cartoons like this one in Sylvia Pankhurst's 'Workers Dreadnought' fuelled fears that returning troops would fall easy prey to revolutionary agitators.



Members of the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers march to Downing Street, October 1920.

trying to negotiate the removal of the women at a (yet another!) joint union/bosses forum, but had met resistance from the bosses (who were paying the women lower rates).

The main left organisation, the ILF, failed to intervene--its weakness described today by a Bristol ILF member of the 1920's, Danny Price: 'Unfortunately, although as a propaganda unit within the Labour Party the ILF was effective, its cardinal weakness was its lack of contact with the Trade Union Movement. Thus, although we had the necessary conditions for revolutionary change, the mass of discontent of the embittered ex-servicemen were led into a diversity of channels. The struggle for jobs became a struggle against female labour.'

In the absence of either a leadership of the women in defence of their jobs or an intervention by socialists arguing for that defence, class politics in Bristol were tripped, tangled and incapacitated by sexism. This is captured in the confusion of G. Gilmore, a leader of the International Union of Ex-servicemen: 'It has been suggested I and my colleagues are out to declare a sex war

or 'a class war'...that we have declared a class war is quite true, but the class we have declared war against are the employers, who we find are exploiting labour by keeping women in jobs...previously filled by men, and are paying sweated wages...we do not intend to stand by and watch them (the sacked women tramway workers) starve... Gilmore saw the exploitation of both men and women, then divided the one class that could eliminate it.

The position was catastrophic, but it was general. Even the ILF's paper 'The Bristol Forward' had blandly commented on the training of women clerks in 1916: 'The trade unions think it is another menace to their minimum wage and to the jobs of the men if and when they come back.' The left was echoing the concerns of the ruling class.

There was a similar echo of racist ideas. There was little hope for a left which had to break ex-soldiers from the imperialist drivel of the Ven. Archdeacon of Swindon who at the Bristol Cathedral memorial service organised by ex-servicemen's organisations preached a pacem to the British Empire: 'a free association of peoples...under

the protection of the Empire until they can think and act discreetly for themselves,' if the ILF paper could, disgustingly, announce: 'During one week recently no less than six transports left Avonmouth manned and stewarded by Chinese while British seamen and stewards were walking the streets out of work.'

Anti-Chinese riots in the East End of London in June 1919 and anti-Arab riots in Cardiff led by medal-wearing ex-servicemen were useful diversions for the ruling class in a potentially revolutionary situation.

A talk by Lieutenant A.E. Spry of the Navy League to Bristol Rotary Club in June 1919 shows just how the ruling class capitalises on racism to attack all workers: 'We should see that (our) men were found employment on British ships and that their position was not swamped by foreigners, and oppose the selfish policy of the Dockers Union at Avonmouth in barring seamen from labour ashore while they were kept waiting for a ship.'

How could the Left break workers and ex-servicemen from backwardness if they echoed it? In January 1919

Unemployed and ex-soldiers' struggles in Bristol after World War I

Jack Linton was to be found in Bath addressing a meeting in protest at the employment of a German worker at a Bath firm. In July Luke Bateman,

local ILP leader, at a large meeting at Badminton Hippodrome, sent fraternal greetings to the working class movement of Italy and France. But what of Germany's workers? Greetings were sent on the basis of the bosses' alliances, not on the basis of 'international working class solidarity.' Right-wing Labour echoed the bosses and they in turn were echoed by the Labour left.

The failure to defend women workers was a disaster not only for socialists, but also for the ex-servicemen's movement for by late 1920 unemployment was no longer a predominantly ex-servicemen's concern, and throwing women workers on the dole was hardly a good start to broadening the base of the movement. Within a year, the main amalgamated forces of the ex-servicemen had dropped open politics and formed Bristol's British Legion as a social and benevolent association.

The lessons for socialists today are clear and still urgent: the Labour Party's reformism (the way it looks to Parliament and the Council Chamber rather than the working class to change things) and the role it plays in the state apparatus makes it an obstacle to socialism--the history of 1919 demonstrates that even the left of the Labour Party will leap or tumble to the defence of the state unless it breaks from that party.

While the right wing of the Labour movement necessarily reflects the ideas of the ruling class, if the left reflects the ideas of the Labour right (for example, the separation of the political from the economic, as in the refusal of left political organisations to intervene--'interfere'--in trade union struggles) it will lack the means of breaking workers from what Marx called 'the muck of ages'--e.g. racism, sexism etc.

Unless women's liberation is placed at the centre of class politics, such politics limp on one lifeless leg--trips and stumbles are inevitable. Support for women's emancipation, even the most profound desire for, or deepest analysis of it are all a cheap and

severe trick on that liberation, if they are not accompanied by the material politics to take that liberation to the heart of the class struggle and win it there.

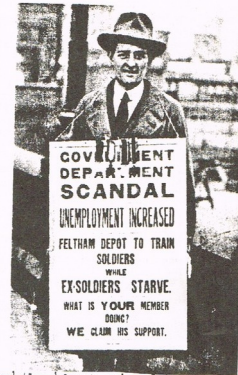
The absence in 1919 of a revolutionary party, able to intervene systematically at crucial moments, such as the joint rail strikers/ex-servicemen's meeting, or at the possibility of the male tram drivers striking in defence of their women colleagues, was disastrous. Here is the missing link of 1919--an organisation centralised enough to maintain unity of action against both the centralised state and the unity of the ruling class, an organisation democratic enough to learn from the working class in struggle--a revolutionary party.

As a footnote to this history an incident in September 1921 illustrates much of our argument. Unemployment had doubled in Bristol, the Bristol branch of the Communist Party--a truly revolutionary, but still tiny party of 2,000 nationally--won a place in the leadership of a number of local demonstrations involving the storming of the Guardians, the raising of the red flag and the declaration we have tried everything from a peaceful standpoint and today we are going to try another.

In a matter of days 'the more moderate leadership of the Labour movement' had been successful in wresting control of the campaign from the rank and file leadership. (Whitfield) But that leadership was delivered not by Sheppard or Linton, but by Walter Ayles of the ILP who explained: 'I wished to prevent violent methods of obtaining reform...to adopt purely pacifist measures and act constitutionally.'

Ayles' intervention handed over the unemployed movement for co-optation by the right-wing Trades Council Secretary Parker in a joint leadership with ex-servicemen old hands like Linton. They did their work for the ruling class well as the Chairman of the Board of Guardians described them both personally as 'very valuable in keeping the men in check.'

What did, and still do, pass for acceptable ideas on much of the Left--pacifism, using the state (Parliament, Council) as the appropriate means to reform, an ambivalent bargain/hate



relationship to the Labour Party which bounces between political concessions and personal rejection, solidarity as an end in itself, that interventions are an interference in the rightful domain of other workers, the unfortunate necessity to respect workers' patriotic and family sensibilities--helped to squander the potential for socialist revolution in 1919.

In 1920 the newly formed Communist Party had the ideas and were developing the political practice to seize the time, but the opportunity of 1919 had passed. When the next chance came in 1926, Stalinism would hand the General Strike to Bevin, Thomas and betrayal. The task of building a revolutionary socialist party in time for the next chance remains the fundamental duty of all socialists today.

DAVE BACKWITH & PHIL SMITH

The Somerset Clarion welcomes articles on any aspect of Somerset or West Country working class history.

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Bridgwater TA6 5JP.

Socialism & Religion: a debate

When socialists consider religion, the main areas of attention are the churches and their repressive role down the ages, the use of religion to reinforce the dominant ideology and the bigotries and hatreds religion provides a moralistic justification for. This allows those with a slightly better intellect than your average god-bather to seek the abstract and deflect the argument away from the practical realities of religion in action. It's quite easy: you just spout out a load of mystical crap, sprinkle on some pretentious phrases to make yourself seem more important and knowledgeable than "ordinary man" (what about ordinary woman?) and you rescue religion from the reality of religious practice.

RELIGIOUS MYTHS

The underlying fundamental principle of religion is the subjugation of humanity to an all-powerful deity in whatever form. In the abstract, this means a voluntary giving up of your own mind to the stupidities of whatever religious myths you may choose, and in concrete reality it means the horrors of the inquisition etc. They are fundamentally the same, and therefore we must reject both. The author condemns himself and his argument, not only with his sexism, but by creating an intolerable hierarchy in his very first paragraph: "Religion is revealed to man (sic) through the mediumship of seers whose perception of reality is expanded beyond that of ordinary man (sic)."

It is indicative of the state of the Socialist movement at present that this silly nonsense is even accorded the respect of serious debate. The moderating influence of religion in the history of the class struggle is well recorded, and the article by Clive Wynn should stand as an example of past mistakes. Have we learnt from history?

WHY WHY?

I watched a debate between science and religion on Newsnight, and amongst all the mystifying jargon from both the theologians and the sole atheist, an interesting point came up. The theologians had adopted the tactic of conceding to science on things like evolution etc., but

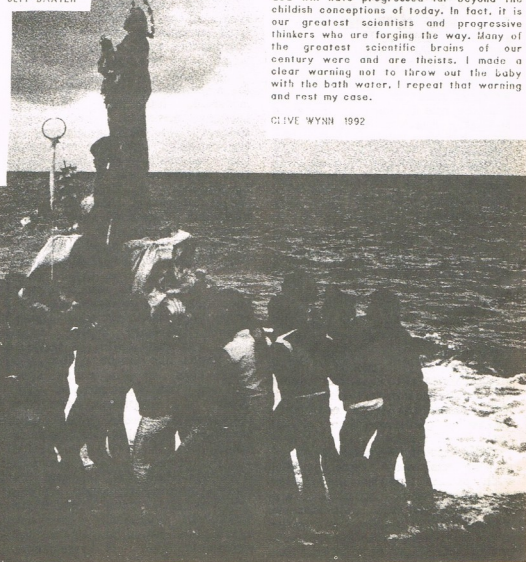
asserting that whilst science can answer 'how?', only God can answer 'why?'. The atheist came back with the question: "Why do you need a why?" It then occurred to me that the question of "Why why?" is a very important one. Religion is created by humanity asking why: Why do we exist? Why do we suffer poverty, war and oppression? Why are some rich and powerful and others not?

RELIGION A HUMAN CREATION

In the absence of answers to these questions (i.e. that all suffering, oppression and war is created by humanity, and that only humanity can solve these problems) religion was created. If we can't explain something, we make things up! Religion and every separate aspect of religion, including the concept of the deity, is a direct creation of human society. It has no separate existence outside of human society. Changing from culture to culture, its form is determined by its environment. The more advanced a society becomes in its science and culture, the greater the retreat of religion and superstition.

We have come a long way since those who saw the light against such nonsense as essential to the advance of humanity as a whole were being murdered for their courage, but we still have a long way to go before we are free from the mystics who would manipulate our ignorance for their own advantage. There are no areas of the universe which we cannot understand without resorting to God, only boundaries to be pushed back.

JEFF BAXTER



Calabria: The procession of St Andrew at Monasterace. Every four years the effigy is carried across land and rivers

A Reply to an Angry Atheist

I thank J.L. Baxter for his vitriolic rejoinder to my article. However, I do object to being declared sexist on the basis of my use of a word which everybody who speaks English should know carries a common gender in such incidences (nevertheless, I shall be more careful in future). I spent quite a bit of energy and patience to make a clear distinction in my article between 'real' or essential religion and the religion upheld and propagated by the Church, which is really inspired by political motivations. J.L. Baxter, as if he had never read the article at all, immediately slammed the two back together and tried to make a mockery of everything I was saying. As to his assertion that everything in the universe can be understood by unaided human investigation, I doubt it. It is a brave illusion, but there yet remains a veil before our intellect, despite the continued and persistent probings of science, which obscures from our vision the original causes of things. We talk of the phenomenon called life, but we don't know what it is. We speak of knowledge, but we haven't come anywhere near to an understanding of what constitutes consciousness, which is the very faculty of knowledge. After many centuries of hard labour in research and science, people will return to God for the answer to the whys and wherefores, and there they shall find it. Albeit, by that time, the concept of God will have progressed far beyond the childish conceptions of today. In fact, it is our greatest scientists and progressive thinkers who are forging the way. Many of the greatest scientific brains of our century were and are theists. I made a clear warning not to throw out the baby with the bath water, I repeat that warning and rest my case.

CLIVE WYNN 1992

The Grim Quartet of Threats

There is a threatening sort of 'Catch 22' situation developing in the global environment. The United Nation's Intergovernmental Committee on Climate Change (IPCC) has recently declared itself more certain than ever that global warming is on the way. Repeating their earlier warning, they say that world temperature would rise by at least 0.2 degrees centigrade a decade, faster than any rate recorded in the past 10,000 years. Reasons include reductions of ice in the Arctic and snowfall in the northern hemisphere, with Swiss glacier shrinkage an additional factor.

GLOBAL WARMING (the green-house effect) is caused mostly by carbon dioxide of which, sadly, motor transport is one of the major sources. Methane is a more potent culprit, but there is less of it. However, the U.N. committee believes the warming effect is slowing down. Reassuring? Hardly, the main reason, says the U.N., is another global catastrophe—the depleting ozone layer, causing a dangerous invasion of ultra-violet rays. These can trigger skin cancers and eye cataracts (a growing menace in Australasia). Sheep are going blind in Chile. Why?

OZONE DEPLETION may mean that the widespread floods, earlier forecast by scientists, from rising seas, may be delayed. Small solace for those whose health suffers from the enlarging ozone holes.

Contributions to THE CLARION represent the writers' views, and not necessarily those of the CLARION or of the SOMERSET COMMUNITY DEFENCE CAMPAIGN. The aim of the Clarion is to be an open discussion journal for the labour movement. Please let us have YOUR views, ideas, and information. All contributions to THE EDITOR, SOMERSET CLARION, 4 GORDON TERRACE, BRIDGWATER, SOMERSET

SUPPORTERS' SUBSCRIPTION: 6 issues for £5.00

Another prophet of doom is the eminent US climatologist, Roger Bulling. The WIDENING DESERTS, he declares, further add to the planet's heat. His analysis, reports the New Scientist, of long-term temperature records from 120 sites in the northern hemisphere found that desertified areas had warmed up by an average of 1.23 degrees centigrade. Meanwhile some 20 billion tons of topsoil disappears each year, causing desert land to grow annually by an area the size of Austria. Who to blame? Over-grazing and deforestation are major causes, compounded, for example, by the current drought in southern Africa, said to be the worst this century.

RAIN FOREST DESTRUCTION, thousands of acres every day, is seen by many as a deadly bore ('I couldn't care less about the rain forests'—playwright John Osborne). Dead? Yes, indeed, because it has meant the extinction of countless rare species, many unclassified. At this distance, can concerned people do anything about it? Yes, a little. The Nailsa Environmental Action Group saved an acre by buying it. Individuals and groups can do the same under a scheme backed by David Bellamy. Easy for some! Just send £25 to Programme for Belize, PO Box 99, Saxmundham, Suffolk, IP10 2YJ. A new slant on a property-owning democracy, that beloved goal of Thatcherite economist!

STAN HAYWARD/Spring 1997



traffic chaos in London

Private bridge may take a heavy toll

THE newly-privatised Severn Bridge linking England and Wales, may exact a high price from those who work on it and use it during the Nineties.

At midnight on 3 March next year the 25-year-old road crossing will come under new ownership, its operations transferred from Avon County Council to Cofroute, a French company which runs nearly 200 miles of continental motorway.

Three miles downstream, subject to an Enabling Bill hurrying through Parliament, an Anglo-French consortium, John Laing and GTM Entrepote, will begin work on a £300m, six-lane crossing, due to open in the mid-Nineties, linking England and Wales.

Toll increases and heavy redundancies among staff operating the old four-lane suspension

Severn Bridge staff fear its privatisation will mean high tolls and redundancies. Peter Dunn reports

bridge will mark the new owner's determination to clear its construction costs and outstanding debts on the old bridge well within 30 years. After that both crossings will be handed back to the state.

Charges of secrecy have been made by employees. One wrote an anonymous letter to the Western Daily Press accusing the Government of abandoning a 25-year-old promise to abolish the bridge tolls by 2006 when the bridge debt, now £120m, should have been cleared.

The writer says that plans to abolish east-bound tolls will be accompanied by stiff increases in

two-way fees. Cars, now paying £1 each way, will be charged at least £2.90 for a double crossing by 1995. Light vans will go up from £2 for a two-way crossing to £5.60.

"Despite these massive increases, Cofroute still sees fit to implement cost-cutting measures better suited to their own country," the writer says. "They start at the top with the manager who after many years of great service will be sent down the road... It has been indicated to us that the 'lucky ones' who will be staying on will have their work load more than doubled."

The tolls are opposed by motorist organisations and trade asso-

ciations who anticipate a serious effect for firms that are already struggling. An AA spokesman said: "We believe the motorist already pays a lot for travelling around the road network."

Neither Avon County Council nor the new bridge company, to be known as Severn River Crossing, would comment in detail on the complaints.

A spokesman for the Department of Transport said: "Under the new Bill the concessionaires have 30 years to correct a debt on the existing bridge and recover the cost of building a new one. If not collected enough in tolls, they lose money. There is a provision for five years beyond that period for the Government to collect tolls for bridge maintenance. After that the bridge is toll free."

SOMERSET CLARION

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LABOUR & TRADE UNION
MOVEMENT IN THE SOUTH WEST*



Shell shock: A wounded Bosnian woman being taken by ambulance to Sarajevo's Kosevo hospital after a shell landed in the centre of the city, wounding six people
Photograph: László Balogh/Reuters

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** SOMERSET MINERS' BANNER (p 9) **JOBSEEKERS' ALLOWANCE (p11)
*** THE LABOUR PARTY & SOCIALISTS (p 5) ***
*** LETTERS FROM BRISTOL, NEWHAM, TOWER NUM, TORINO (p 4) ***

SOMERSET CLARION

Socialist Journal of the Somerset Community

Defence Campaign

An annual subscription costs £5 for 6 copies. Please make cheques payable to Somerset Community Defence Campaign, and send to 4 Gordon Terrace, Bridgwater TA6 5JP

We meet on the first Sunday of each month, at 2.30pm, in Unity House, (Top Floor), Dampiet St., Bridgwater. For details ring 01278 450562

Our next two meetings are on SUNDAY 3rd September & SUNDAY 1st October

SOMERSET COMMUNITY DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

We were formed in 1985, by socialists & trades unionists in the Somerset area who had been active during the 1984-5 NUM strike, & who saw the relevance of that struggle to jobs & communities everywhere.

The capitalist system is destroying our communities & our way of life. 15 years of Tory rule have hastened the process in Britain. Only a strong & united labour movement, linked to progressive campaigns for peace, civil liberties, & environmental protection can defend us, & ultimately resolve this crisis.

Our role is to campaign independently in the working class movement, & to help build confidence & willingness to fight. We only want to work with those who want to win - too many struggles have gone down because they've been hijacked by defeatists & compromisers.

DON'T JUST MOAN - ORGANISE!

CONTACTS

If you would like to know more about the Somerset Community Defence Campaign, or if you would like us to help you organise a meeting or campaign in your area, please contact:

BRIDGWATER: Brian Smedley 01278 451877
Glen Burrows 01278 450562
Dave Chapple 01278 450562

TAUNTON: Mike Langton 01823 278811

YEovil: Bill Byrd 01935 851020
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The KSL was named after Kate Sharpley, a First World War anarchist & anti-war activist - one of the countless 'unknown' members of the movement so ignored by official historians of anarchism.

If you would like to use the facilities, or receive details of publications send s.a.e.
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WINSTON SILCOTT

Nobody will accept his innocence

From Winston Silcott to the national press:

Sir: Justice doesn't exist in Britain, especially if a person is black or of working-class background. Once again, the so-called British justice system has failed to rectify a blatant injustice. Instead, the might of the ruling authorities saw fit to re-try an innocent man to justify their illegal wrong-doings. The latest slander on my name is a similar re-run of the smear campaign waged by some of the media back in 1985, 1986 and 1987.

What people of this country don't want to admit is that I am totally innocent of PC Blakelock's death, and not guilty of Anthony Smith's murder. To put it bluntly, a black person can be innocent. If defending my life against three men armed with knives who intended doing me serious harm is classified as murder, there is something seriously wrong with the present system.

The real fact behind my invalid incarceration is that I have been politically exploited to relieve the pressure off the police and higher authorities' backs.

And at the same time, when I was being prepared to be crucified for PC Blakelock's murder, the powers that be also made sure that the way was paved for me to be steamrollered through the Smith case. The authorities were able to destroy whatever chance I ever had of having a fair trial in the Smith case - by making sure I was arrested for PC Blakelock's murder.

The Smith/Blakelock saga has been prejudiced at every turn. The slander still continues that I was

involved in any way with the Broadwater Farm uprising. There is nothing wrong with the Esda test: remember, when the police want to convict people by using the Esda test, then the Esda test is the best. The Esda test has only been rubbished because it blatantly exposes normal police practice.

The judge approved 14 un-named statements to be read out by the defence to the jury. What the judge did was wrong. Why has no-one asked why none of these so-called witnesses ever gave evidence before? And why were the police given permission to take statements from three, five and eight-year olds? If the media are correct, that the witnesses' ages range between 13, 15, 18, etc., then if these statements are new, the people who are alleged to have made them were actually younger when the police claimed they saw what they saw in 1985.

The ruling authorities can continue the lie that I am guilty by using every means necessary. But at the end of the day it's their beloved justice system that suffers.

No justice, no peace.

Political hostage

W SILCOTT
HMP Swaleside
Kent

PS: I will never be getting out of this penal hell unless I receive justice in the Smith case, because any fool can see I am not in jail for the Smith case: I am here due to the fact that I was chosen.



Bernie Grant (right), MP for Tottenham, with Bill & Mary Silcott after Winston was cleared of killing PC Keith Blakelock

LETTERS

From Will Brown

Dear Somerset Community Defence Campaign,

I placed an 'advert' for the latest Clarion (No. 37) on the Marxist Bulletin Board on the Internet, offering to send a 'Clarion' free to the first five people who e-mailed me their s-mail addresses. I also briefly described the Clarion and listed the contents of No. 37. Six comrades promptly responded: Lisa Rogers, Salt Lake City; Bryan Alexander, Ann Arbor, Jerry Levy - New York; Paul Lykotrapits - Ottawa; Scott Marshall - Chicago; Jeff Booth - Maryland. I know nothing about them except for Jeff Booth, who is a union activist at Harvard University and a member of the American section of Labour Militant. I also posted half a dozen Clarions to activists in the University technicians union, MSF, around the UK (London, Glasgow, Liverpool).

I enjoyed Clarion No. 37 a lot. Could I contribute my 6d worth on the following items?

Macdonalds: I have always been a but sceptical of the anti-Macdonalds campaign. The crimes they are accused of seem to me to be those many large retailers are guilty of: a) they sell meat b) they use wasteful packaging c) they are anti-union d) their food is promoted as healthy when it isn't really. I have often heard middle-class people slag off Macdonalds & it always sounds a bit snobby to me. They say, in unbelieving voices: 'You don't go to Macdonalds do you?' And then, in the very next sentence they say: 'I'm just off to Sainsbury's to buy a 1lb of mince to make a risotto.' Why is it better to shop from Sainsbury's rather than Macdonald's? 'An industry of sleaze, corruption & death': Stan Hayward says'

Hundreds of thousands of workers are employed in the British arms trade, some, no doubt, readers of the Somerset Clarion. Who can blame them? A job is a job is a job in this period of high unemployment.' Well - I can blame them, Stan. Although I know people are forced to do work they think is at best useless and at worst downright harmful, at some point people must be responsible for

their actions in spite of the economic compulsions of capitalism. Is it OK for British workers to make the landmines described by Hazel Barkham? Sadly, even more British workers made arms during periods of full employment than they do today. I would think that having such jobs probably made them less left-wing and more nationalistic than they would otherwise have been. I think Karl Marx was right when he said the alienation of workers in capitalism is that they build their own prison - they arm their oppressors & then kneel before them. Perhaps Clarion readers could vote on which jobs are sufficiently anti-working class to make them inexcusable for any working-class person to do?

1) abattoir worker 2) prison officer
3) poll tax bailiff 4) land-mine maker
5) Store detective 5) lawyer 6) guard
at Auschwitz 7) journalist for the Sun
8) policeman 9) paratrooper

Yours sincerely, Will Brown

From Tower Colliery NUM Lodge...

Dear Dave,

Please excuse the delay in replying. Regarding your article in the last Clarion, it was a very interesting & factual story about our come-back to Tower. As you know, Dave, the two worker-directors have done, and are doing a marvellous job. Since returning, we have grown to feel secure in our workplace. Long-term employment is now back in the Cynon Valley. We still have our critics who say that we are now all capitalists, that we have forsaken our associates and life-long friendships. This, I can assure you is totally opposite. Because we are in such a strong position at Tower, we can now afford to highlight other people's problems even more, knowing there can be no retaliation at all.

If you want to give us a visit to see the 'unique' situation we have here, please feel free to give us a ring anytime. We could, if you wish, arrange a face visit. Looking forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely,
WAYNE THOMAS

Tower Lodge Secretary

From John Laing.....

Dear Dave,
It was good to see the Clarion again at the start of the year. It was a good read, with plenty of information and, always, very optimistic.

My job as a housing officer keeps me very busy. Newham Council (60 out of 60 Labour councillors) has openly embraced competitive tendering to the point of volunteering areas of the Housing Department for CCT. For somebody like myself, this will mean that the management will want me to spend more time collecting rents, less time on visiting the estates, wearing a name badge, & not wearing jeans.

Our branch is opposing CCT and is not involved in any negotiations. Unfortunately our hand was weakened last May when a ballot to take industrial action over voluntary competitive tendering was lost amongst housing department members. The main factor behind this result was that people were still fearful (and apathetic) following the end of our branch strike the previous year. Management have certainly used the loss of that strike and the capitulation of the national union to start chipping away at our conditions. Because we were a thorn in the side of the national union during the dispute - besieging the London offices a couple of times and taking over the General Secretary's office, we have had a rather frosty relationship over the past couple of years.

The main task of the branch has been to hold things together whilst we try and rebuild. We lost about 400 members during the dispute, and many good activists left the authority after the dispute. I am currently involved in a small group who have drawn up a building the branch programme which we are now putting into practice. This, and my day-to-day shop steward work keeps me fairly busy.

There are lots of concerns about the way that the merger into UNISON has gone, especially from 'the left' who pushed hard for the merger. In London only one branch, Hackney, has
Contd on Page 10.....

THE LABOUR PARTY & SOCIALISTS

Although convinced of the fundamentally anti-socialist nature of the Labour Party & the labour & trade union bureaucracy, I believe that socialists have been correct to use the platform of Parliament & other bourgeois, democratic institutions when possible. Why is this not a contradiction?

First, Social Democracy (an old name for the labour movement dating back to the foundation of the Second or Socialist International in the 1880s), both in the form of political parties & in its trade union form, has acted in Western Europe as policeman of the working class, using both political ideology & the concessions of higher living standards & the welfare state, to bind workers to the national bourgeoisie in each country. The result is that parasitic finance capital is the major international political player. At the same time, the true international class, the working class, is carved up by national & ethnic divisions. In Britain, with its old craft union traditions, trade unionism is even more sectionalised than elsewhere.

The other key player in this system of control of the workers' movement was Stalinism. The Communist Parties, rooted in the political interests of the bureaucracy in the USSR & its satellites, stifled any possibility of a break to the left of social democracy, by strangling Marxism theoretically and practically. In Italy & France, for much of the period since 1945, the CPs were the major workers' parties charged with maintaining control. The move of the French CP to outright racism & organising attacks on black workers' hostels, in an attempt to stop members from defecting to the Front National, serves to illustrate the problems of such politics. The collapse of Stalinism & the possibility this opens up of the regeneration of revolutionary politics, brings me to my second point.

Why did a major chunk of the left join the Labour Party, particularly in the 1980s? I would argue that it was right for socialists to challenge Labour from within for most of the period since 1945; and now, with the crisis of the workers' movement, the clampdown on any activity inside the Labour Party, & the end of Stalinism, to be outside. I do not mean that the left should have centred its activity totally on the Labour Party at all times, in the style of Militant, but that it should

have maintained a presence as one part of a strategy of politically challenging social democracy under conditions where it held no independent base.

Which factors led to the left intervention in the late 70's & most of the 80's? Firstly, the particular chronic crisis of decline of British manufacturing capital, aided & abetted by probably the most successful parasitic finance sector in the world (the host is in desperate straits). This capital faces a working class which has been successful in militantly demanding better conditions, but now has no mass political culture or understanding. Thus, as the crisis deepened from the 1960's onwards, & capital moved to confront the working class more & more sharply, there was a rise in militant trade unionism & class struggle internationally, through the late 60's & into the 80's. This was not generally matched on the political front: the social democracy successfully held the line. Secondly, the impact this had on the Labour Party itself, first of all in the period of the Wilson Government of 1964-70, where there was mass disillusion, an enormous loss of membership & breakdown in the basic function of the party. A comrade in Coventry described it as a situation where constituency parties could not function for lack of attendance, & people would spit at you if you attempted to canvass for Labour. However, Heath's defeat by the miners in '74 underlined the lack of a political alternative, with the return of the 74-79 Wilson/Callaghan government. This coincided with the end of proscription in the LP in 1975, brought about by the rise of left social democracy in the trades unions.

Proscription had not been a major obstacle to being a member of the LP. Virtually all the far-left groups in Britain in the 50's & 60's were members. Tony Cliff & his International Socialists, who became the SWP in the 70's, drifted out of Labour on the tidal wave of resignations in 64-70, leaving only the Militant. Expulsions were largely because groups deliberately got themselves expelled. Gerry Healey & the Socialist Labour League (later WRP) were expelled in '59, & the YS, which they controlled was expelled in 1963-64 because it suited Healey's purpose to declare an open group & be thrown out. By 1975 some parts of the left realised they had to confront social democracy

from within, & started joining Labour. But the real move towards intervention came after Thatcher's election, & the feeling of "never again" against the policies of the Wilson/Callaghan years. The left was able to challenge a weakened social democracy in both unions & LP. This, in turn, revealed the political weakness of the left. Most groups concentrated on recruitment, to the detriment of politics & strategies to win struggles. With isolated exceptions there is a lack of internationalism, which has to aim beyond solidarity movements towards mass dialogue & action: internationally-based class organisation.

In local government the left failed, & wound up either out of office or as direct agents of the government. The government staged a series of political confrontations with the unions: starting with the steel strike in 1980 & reaching a high point with the miners' strike of 1984-5. The response of social democracy was to isolate each section in turn & watch it defeated - refusing to contemplate the alternative of serious confrontation with the capitalist class. Again, Stalinism came to the rescue. Scargill himself, having gone to the left of his political origins in the CP, failed to challenge the deliberate isolation of the NUM by the TUC. Instead, he attempted to reframe the 1974 dispute in radically different circumstances. There was no breakout, no political challenge to the imposed deals in rail, cars & the sabotage of a series of dock strikes, either from the NUM, or in the unions concerned. When the government began the sequestration & legal takeover of the NUM, no major political demand was put on the TUC. The political poverty of the left was even more starkly outlined: in the face of a 364-day national dispute with a mass solidarity movement behind it, most of the left had no strategy to win. It is in the wake of this defeat that the current situation has emerged. The answers must come out of the end of Stalinism, the renewal of Socialism & the continued capitalist crisis. The Labour Party is now very weak. It is locked to a capitalist class fast running out of options. It no longer has any differences with the Government. It cannot allow any significant debate or dissent & it has lost most of its activist base. The implementation of the poll tax & summary mass expulsions make it vulnerable to challenge from the left, electorally & organisationally.

MATTHEW JONES, GLASGOW

We welcome further contributions on this subject - some Clarion supporters are members of the Labour Party, others remain outside - see contributions from John Grana, Alan Debenham & Bob Craig in this issue.

BOSNIA: A REFUGEE'S STORY

This is a full, and I hope, reasonably accurate translation of an interview by an Italian journalist, published in 'la Stampa' (31.8.92). The article goes on to say that before this account, no Red Cross official had visited the camp in Brcke, which was only known by hearsay. Cigarette burns on Adica showed that she had been in the camp for a month and a half. Before the war, she was studying to be a computer programmer, and her father worked as a bus-driver. Now she is being kept in a friendly Croatian camp, Veli Jaze at Savudrija, a few kilometres from Bovigno, in Istria, where all her family, in happier days, used to go on holiday. Now her father has been shot dead. She has no news of her mother, last heard of in the Brcke camp, and her young brother has returned to Bosnia to fight the Serbs.

When I first read this article I didn't want to believe it, and I'm sure that many of you will have the same reaction.

If this account is true, then it is terrible news. The West invaded Iraq with far less provocation. It seems that the Serbs have just been waiting for the break-up of the Soviet empire to establish what is basically a fascist state, and this is maybe only the first real tragedy to come out of the dissolution of the Eastern bloc. If a fascist Serbian state continues, it can only lead to continued war throughout the area, and poison relations between Europe and the Muslim world.

Neighbouring Bulgaria has a large Turkish minority, and Italy now has a large Muslim population of about half a million, from North Africa. Serbia will become the organising centre for racist pogroms throughout SE Europe, if they are allowed to get away with these genocidal crimes. It must be seen that the Serbian terms "racial cleansing" are in themselves an invitation to genocide, because they assume that the Muslim and other

minorities are "dirt", to be cleaned up by the means described here.

GEORGE WRIGHT
TORINO, ITALY

'My name is Adica. I'm 17. I come from Brcke. The war began on 1st May. They blew up the bridge over the Sava, the only route between my town and Croatia. My dad was killed by a sniper four days afterwards.

My mother, my brother and I went back to Brcke. We heard an order given by loudspeaker when we were on the road: we had to leave our houses, otherwise they would be blown up with us in them. We left: they were Serbs. They made us get in a white Golf and then they took us to the centre of Brcke. There was lots of blood everywhere. They had killed all the women who worked in the hospital. In the main square there was the body of a woman who had been hanged from a clock tower. Grenades were falling in the square and the splinters continued to tear the woman's body.

My mother was taken to a barracks. My brother and me were taken near the river.' (Then Adica explained with the help of a drawing that a canoeing clubhouse had been converted into a detention centre for boys and young children, housed in two different barracks, originally used for keeping canoes). 'So I never heard any more about my mother. The concentration camp (the expression used by Adica, in Serbo-Croat, is 'logor', the slav pronunciation of the German word) was divided into three sections. One was for children up to 12 years. I was in this group: there were about 40 of us. I'd said I was 10 years old, and they believed me.

The section for women was in a federal army barracks and my mother was there. The first 7 days we were kept without food. Then they bought us a little bag with 15 eggs and a piece of bread. They said that would have to do for a month. We expected that they'd give us something to eat, but instead, nothing. They said that the hens were not laying eggs because they had nothing to eat, and that our mothers would be killed and fed to the hens as meat.

One day they took away a group of

mothers. Luckily my mother wasn't in that group. They passed in front of the children's section and the children recognised their mothers and began to cry. Also the mothers began crying too. Then they made them get in a refrigerated truck and took them away. The day after, they brought eggs and said 'You should thank your mothers, who were sacrificed for you, for these eggs.'

Another section was reserved for the oldest women: they were held in a large shed belonging to the Interplet textile factory. The camps were behind the factory. The women had to work in these camps. When they couldn't work any more or fell ill, they were killed and thrown in a large ditch behind the factory. When one ditch was full, they covered it with earth and began another ditch.

Once, some old women ran away, and they brought them back with a bulldozer, breaking their legs with shovels. Other women who couldn't work any more in the the camps were crushed with tanks. The old women were worst off because some of them didn't know what was happening to them. Other women worked in the factory, where they had gone of their own accord. The radio had ordered the women to present themselves for work in this factory, and promised that nothing would happen to them if they came alone. Instead, they were forced to work in the nude, and the 'ceticnic' took advantage of them..

In the town there is a cafe called the Westtalia. There is a brothel here where the girls of 19 and 20 have to satisfy the militiamen. So, there is the Interplet factory, and behind it the communal ditch, then there is the brothel where they hold the girls prisoner, the building for young children and the boys, and the barracks for women and men: these are all the camps I know of.

Then there is the Kineradi camp, where Croats and Muslims are held together. They torture them in front of the others. I knew the people who did it: Urescovic Dragon, Sasha Veselic and Monica Simonovic smashed bottles and cut the prisoners' skins with the glass. Romana, Diana, Sanja and Vera Simonovic were responsible for torture in the camp. They were followers of Arkan and Seselj (who are, respectively, the head of a group of Serb regulars and the leader of the radical party, backed up by army



MOST OF THE MEN & BOYS IN THIS PHOTO WILL NOW BE DEAD: SLAUGHTERED BY MLADIC'S CHETNIK TROOPS

Residents of the besieged Bosnian town of Srebrenica hold a poster saying 'Thank you and come back' after the first UN aid convoy got through. Photograph: Kametko Page

support. They are based in Serbia). They came in the evening and took away men and women and disappeared, and we didn't hear anything more of them.

They cut off a finger and even someone's hand to take away a ring. Before she left us, my mother told us to get rid of our rings to avoid any trouble.

Men from Seselj arrived and threw some bullets on the ground. Then they ordered people to pick them up. People collected them and then they fired on them with the bullets they had collected. There were mass killings every day. Every evening 8 people were killed. It was revenge for dead Serbs. I was also chosen to be shot. But those people from Brcke who knew me said: 'Her, no. We'll shoot her tomorrow.'

The first day we arrived at the camp, they marked my arms with a Serbian symbol, using the point of a knife. Sasha Vesevic, the camp

commander, made the mark. He also made a star and a crescent, our Muslim symbol. They threw away our documents, and said that we'd be given Serbian documents; that we weren't Muslims any more.

In the meantime, as far as I knew, life in Brcke continued as normal: people worked and lived normally, it was enough for them not to be Muslims. I knew that they went in our houses and took what they wanted, as if it was a market: they pulled up with trucks and took away our things.

I escaped from the camp by taking advantage of a big attack on Brcke. Our side reached as far as Kolobar, and liberated the Kineradi camp. The Serbs were afraid that they would liberate the whole of Brcke. Then my brother and I and my friend Maia and her brother (they're from Zagreb and were caught by the war while they were visiting an aunt) broke a window and ran away from the camp. We jumped in the river and swam for it. They saw us and shouted 'They're escaping' and some who were posted on the minaret of the mosque fired at us,

but we hid behind some small boats and continued swimming. We reached a little harbour on the other bank. Croatian soldiers pointed their guns at us, thinking we were Serbs. We shouted that we were children and then they helped us. They took us to a hospital.'

WORKERS AID FOR BOSNIA

Preparations are now underway for the next Tuzla convoy, which leaves in September. Non-perishable foods, cash & other items urgently needed.

For details contact:

Workers Aid for Bosnia
c/o the Flying Post
PO Box 185
Exeter EX4 4EW
or ring

Geoff Barr 01392 433365

SOUTH-WEST TUC REFUSES AID TO BOSNIAN WORKERS

Report from Dave Chapple

At the July meeting of the South-West TUC, in Bristol, Dave Chapple, from Bridgwater Trades Union Council, proposed the following motion on Bosnia:

'The SW TUC gives its full support to the Summer 1995 aid convoy to the Bosnian city of Tuzla, and resolves as follows:

To donate £100 to the Convoy's organisers; to join the Scottish TUC, Annual Conference of Trades Union Councils, North-West & Midlands regions of the Communication Workers' Union, the GMB & other trade union bodies in publicising support for the convoy; to circulate details of the convoy to all affiliated bodies, including details of the continued attempts by Tuzla citizens to maintain a multi-ethnic community; to urge all affiliated bodies to discuss the Bosnian question & to consider financial & practical support for future convoys organised along similar lines.'

The delegate stressed that the convoy had been requested by the Tuzla TUC District Committee, which consists of 8 Presidents of trades unions still operating in Tuzla: Serbs, Muslims and Croats are all represented. The motion was seconded by Bill Booth from Bath TUC, and supported in debate by Stan Maidment of the Trades Councils Joint Consultative Committee.

The debate was disappointing. Barbara Box, of UNISON complained that a \$100 donation would set a precedent! Mike Graham, SW TUC Secretary said that he had spoken to the TUC International Committee who had denounced the convoy as a front for the Workers' Revolutionary Party! A delegate from UCATT asked if the Tuzla District Committee had applied to affiliate to the TUC! Bryn Rowlands, USDAW full-time official made a pathetic rubbishing speech, saying that both Thatcher and Clinton and the UN would support the motion! The Bridgwater delegate's attempts to answer the objections were hindered by a hostile Chair, and the motion was lost by 24-14, with 7 abstentions.

Meanwhile, the convoy has safely arrived in Tuzla, at 8am on Friday 4th August, after being deliberately held up for 10 days by hostile Croatian authorities. One of the vehicles was sponsored by the Communication Workers' Union, and left Britain with several tons of aid donated by members in sorting offices and telephone exchanges throughout the North West & Midlands regions. The Ford Cargo 1013 was crewed by Jerry Brookes of Manchester, John Fearley from Lancashire, Neville Mawby from Birmingham and Ian Young from Bolton. In Tuzla, they are hoping to make direct links with postal and telecommunications workers. A further CWU Aid for Bosnia truck is being filled in order to leave in September.

The Rally and March for Bosnia, in London on 5th August was supported by West Country socialists including Keith & Sheila Jones from Glastonbury and Geoff Barr from Exeter Workers Aid for Bosnia.

NEWS FROM YEOVIL

Labour rebel stands by his mace 'sit-in'

LABOUR councillor John Grana was unrepentant yesterday after being expelled from a meeting for flouting the authority of a civic mace.

He said he would like to abolish the "antiquated" title of mayor and banish Yeovil's mace to a museum. But he denied being disrespectful to the regalia, which symbolises civic authority.

The outspoken Yeovil town councillor, and Labour colleague Mark Hoskins, had remained sitting when the mace was carried into the council chamber at the start of Tuesday's meeting.

When councillor Grana did the same thing last month Liberal Democrat mayor, councillor Pat Martin, said any member who could not comply with the tradition should come into the meeting later.

And when the two councillors flouted the mace's authority on Tuesday she said she had no alternative but to ask a resolution for their expulsion.

The five other Labour members, including Prospective Parliamentary Labour candidate for Yeovil Joe Conway followed their colleagues out of the chamber when the resolution was passed.

Councillor Grana was expelled under standing orders, which do not specifically mention the mace but say no councillor should misconduct themselves or disregard the chairman.

By Tina Rowe

But later councillor Grana said: "We are trying to break down class barriers."

"The mace is antiquated and belongs in a museum. We also think that the office of mayor should be done away with and a chairman elected."

"A mayor was brought about to deal with trade disputes between guilds and crafts — we are no longer a feudal society."

"But I wasn't being disrespectful and I think it was undemocratic that we had to go. I shall make this stand month after month."

Councillor Grana was expelled under standing orders, which do not specifically mention the mace but say no councillor should misconduct themselves or disregard the chairman.

John Grana is a Somerset Clarion supporter

Gang taunt doctor in racist attack

RACIST taunts were shouted at a hospital doctor and his woman companion feared ~~that~~ she would be gang raped, a council said.

The trouble flared when the couple, on their way to play tennis, were confronted by a gang of youths, prosecuting solicitor Linda Belmont told South Somerset magistrates.

Lee Beresford, aged 18, of Marl Close, Yeovil, admitted assaulting Dr David Cheung and using threatening behaviour.

After Beresford disputed some aspects of the prosecution evidence, the magistrates decided that Dr Cheung should be called as a witness and the case was adjourned.

Mrs Belmont, said Dr Cheung, who works at Yeovil District Hospital, and Jenny Fairbrother were walking towards the Muddiford Recreation Park at Yeovil when the youths blocked their way.

They started shouting racist taunts such as "Hello Chinko," "Why don't you go home," "Nigger" and "Coo."

As the abuse continued, the couple became alarmed and the youths closed in on them.

At one stage, the couple were completely encircled, with threats being made to Miss Fairbrother. Then Beresford committed the assault.

Dr Cheung was left dazed and extremely frightened, added Mrs Belmont.

Western Gazette 5/8/95

Western Daily Press 3/8/95

THE SOMERSET MINERS' BANNER

The North Somerset Coalfield is a fascinating place. To the outsider, Pensford, sitting astride the banks of the River Chew and Midsomer Norton with the tiny River Somer trundling through its main street, appear to be part of an idyllic countryside - manicured Mendip. 'Down there' its different. There are seams of unmined coal and seams of labour history. Radstock gives it away. Slap bang in the middle of the town is the old winding wheel from one of the last pits operating in the area. At Midsomer Norton you can still see the conical shape of a colliery 'batch'. Pensford still has its Miners Welfare Institute in the middle of the village. Scratch the surface and you will find many men over a certain age are ex-miners and have many tales to tell.

When I was selected Labour's candidate for Wansdyke in 1987 I was told many tales and one of them included the story of the lost banner. I have never been able to work out quite why and what happened but at some stage after the 1973 miners' strike the North Somerset banner was taken to somewhere in South Wales. 'Get it back, and we might accept you comrade' was what I was told. Well I didn't...at least not to begin with, but I could never understand the mystery of what had happened. I still don't.

South Wales has just about three coal mines now. As the Lodges have disappeared and the old South Wales Federation has slowly disintegrated, much of the historical materials have been sent to the University of Swansea. I think this is fair enough. The miners' libraries contain a wealth of political and social educational material which simply has to be properly catalogued and maintained. This is part of a people's history of struggle and if the alternative is to let mildew and damp destroy it then a bit of academic love and care is far better.

I made enquiries of Howell Francis, son of Dai. Nobody knew what had happened to the Somerset banner. It was certainly not at Swansea. I made telephone calls and wrote letters until finally I actually extracted confirmation in writing. The lost banner was in a cupboard in Pontypridd.

Shortly after I was elected Euro MP I received an approach from the Radstock and District Museum Society. They wanted me to replace Richard Cotterell as the Vice President. I checked this out with local Labour Party Branches. I was not given authority immediately. Some regarded the Society as the property of the ruling class. One of the patrons included Mr. Beauchamp, a descendant of the original owners of many of the North Somerset mines.

I tried to explain this and sent the Trustees a copy of an extract from Peter Collier's book 'Colliers Way'. There Peter Collier referred to an extract from diaries of the Rev. J. Skinner, Vicar of Camerton, who wrote : '1824 August 22nd. I afterwards walked to Tinsbury across the fields. In my way I stopped at Tyler's house at Daglan, and was destined to see the exhibition of the

mangled face of the poor collier as he lay in his coffin. Surely the lower orders cannot have the same feelings as we have, otherwise they would take no delight in exposing what ought with the greatest care to be concealed, or in visiting what must convey sensations of horror rather than those of satisfaction'

The Beauchamp and the Waldegrave families may argue that times have changed. They have - they do not own the mines any more. Attitudes like that of the Reverend Skinner caused deep resentment. Eventually I did receive approval from local Labour Party Branches and I am now Vice President of the Museum Society.

Meanwhile the banner lay in the cupboard.

Then the Government came up with the idea of closing 31 pits and talking merrily about Workfare. On 6 February Norton Radstock Town Council and the South West TUC sponsored a meeting at the Victoria Hall in Radstock. I was asked to speak but the pride of the platform was a member of the NUM from Leeds. What an opportunity, an official rally backed by the Unions. I made my approaches to the Guardians of the Cupboard in Pontypridd. Time after time I met with this strange resistance. The South Wales NUM even denied that they had the banner, but it turned out to be a cupboard in an immediately adjacent office of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation. Everyone to whom I spoke in Pontypridd was profoundly suspicious. When I finally arrived to collect it I had to give a written undertaking to return it.

Clarion readers can imagine the scene when, come the glorious day the scarlet banner was raised high at the Victoria Hall.

Immediately after the rally the telephone calls began. I was accused in so many words of theft of the wretched item. I returned it and got a receipt. I still do not understand what this is all about. It seems to me that whilst it is right and proper that miners' history should be faithfully recorded and preserved in Swansea for the South Wales coal field, it is equally right and proper that the Somerset banner should be kept on this side of the Bristol Channel. Some comrades have said that there was a Resolution passed at the final meeting of the Somerset NUM to the effect that the banner should be kept either in Radstock or Midsomer Norton Library. Others would like it to be in the safe hands of the Museum Society. Whatever happens, it should not, in my view, be kept folded in a cupboard in Pontypridd. Maybe the NUM could agree to lend it out from time to time for exhibition. It is, after all, NUM property. Therein lies the dilemma. All we have now in the North Somerset coal field are retired members of the NUM. Their daughters and sons who inherit the past struggles of their families have no strict property rights. It is, after all, property rights which placed the Beauchamp and Waldegrave families in the positions of power which they enjoyed for so long. All we are asking for please is a loan.

AN INDEPENDENT GREEN SOCIALIST IN BISHOPS HULL

I've been asked to do a little bit on my joyful re-election to Taunton Deane District Council as an Independent Green Socialist (IGS). I have described myself officially as such since 1991 (at Council meetings, in press releases, etc) although at the elections in that year - after resignation from 27 years' front-line Labour Party work (because of being a leader in the massive anti-poll tax protest!) - I described myself as an Independent Green Democrat. Whatever - the media & local government bureaucracy decide that the "establishment" allows you only to be referred to as "independent": in other words, the more traditionally-accepted closeted Tory!

It certainly was a great joy, after nearly four weeks' full-time door-step campaigning, to top the Bishops Hull poll (1,350 houses, urban outskirts, 2-councillor, Taunton ward) with the Labour Party second and therefore elected, as a Labour gain from the previous Lib-Dem. The turn-out was 53%, significantly above the 48% Taunton Deane average. The votes went 654 (Independent Socialist) 603 (Labour) 546 (Lib Dem) 342 (Con) & 314 (Con).

How did I fare so well in a village/suburb with a past strong Tory flavour? The basic reason revolves around:

* **my determination & ability** (I am unemployed, with savings) to make my "independent" campaigning on par with, if not better than, any party-political campaign in my ward - especially regarding comprehensive personal door-step canvassing & good leaflets.

* **my experience & reputation** for hard work in electioneering, in local government, in community affairs & active community campaigning, in many popular "community defence" protests: poll-tax, VAT on fuel, cuts in public services, animal welfare, green issues, concessionary fares etc.

* **my good fortune** in that this front-line activism in two recent campaigns on education cuts & on excessive & unwanted County & Taunton Deane

development) coincided with great outbursts of spontaneous support from within the ward, across all parties & incomes.
* **the topicality** & strong support/understanding of green socialism as a positive, 21st century alternative to discredited Toryism & free-market capitalism (IGS could well go far as an "independent" force, putting pressure on Labour to keep green socialism on its agenda!)

Picking up from the last point, and to some extent answering the point Dave Chapple made in the last issue in his article on Lawrence Daly: yes, I do feel "independence" now has as vital a political role to play as in Daly's early days, because, especially at local level, it could well be the only active vehicle left available to keep the left's batteries fired-up and ready to intervene on all suitable occasions, at all levels and into all avenues. The emergence of the magazine Red Pepper (I am a founding subscriber & investor) as an important green socialist media appendage to the Socialist Movement, the Clarion, the Somerset Community Defence Campaign itself, are all parts of this vital phenomenon for left-wing organisation & views to stay active & prominent. DESPITE the capitulation of Labour to market capitalism.

Long may every form of current left-wing independence reign and pull together!

The way Blair and Labour are facing up at the moment, as silly as it sounds, Independent Green Socialism's growing strength may be the only way any of us can continue to dream of a "socialist revolution" of the future. The Green of Green Socialism is the vital new ingredient, which could make it feasible - with the environmental holocaust moving closer towards us every day at the same pace as capitalist disintegration! ? Think on.

**CLLR ALAN DEBENHAM,
INDEPENDENT GREEN
SOCIALIST,
BISHOPS HULL WARD
TAUNTON DEANE DC**

Letter from John Laing - Contd from Page 4.....

merged, whilst others continue as before but calling themselves UNISON 1 and UNISON 2!

Lots of ex-NUPE branch officials appear to be preparing to line their pockets before accepting the mergers. No membership card are being issued this year because of "financial constrictions" and UNISON travel has gone bankrupt. Things are likely to get worse before they get better.

I'm still getting involved in stuff outside of work, but not to the extent that I did whilst at Hackney Trade Union Support Unit, where the work and political activities were one and the same. There has been quite a lot going on locally, with the M11 protests, and the National Front putting up candidates in local council seats in Newham. Although they were beaten, the size of their vote should not lead to any complacency.

Anyway, Dave, enough of me for now. Keep well

Yours fraternally,
**JOHN LAING, EX- SOGAT & WAPPING
STRIKER, FORMER CONVENOR OF
SOLIDARITY NETWORK**

Wells Relief Road Campaign

Somerset County Council wants to build a £14,000,000 road, which would pass through two schools' playing fields; pass within 100 yards of a primary school & two play groups, increase 5-fold the number of heavy lorries passing through Wells; increase light, air & noise pollution and increase the risk of road traffic accidents.

The Council have not carried out an Environmental Impact Assessment nor a Watercourse Survey, and have ignored a recent poll among Wells people, where 55% voted against the section across the school playing fields.

Campaigners are calling, instead, for a viable traffic management scheme, including: improved provision of cycle paths & lanes; Park & Ride schemes using electric buses; improved pedestrian facilities; staggered goods delivery times & re-instatement of railway links. For details of how you can help the Campaign contact:

**West Side Books, Sadler St,
Wells BA5 2SE**

FIGHT THE JSA

Job Seekers' Allowance advisers will be able to use their new powers to direct job seekers to improve their 'employability' through, for example, attending a course to improve job-seeking skills or motivation, or taking steps to present themselves acceptably to employers. What constitutes an 'acceptable appearance' is not outlined, but there are fears that this may be used to discriminate against minority groups.

Benefit sanctions for breaking 'labour market conditions' will be extended to 'people who do not complete and sign a Job Seekers' Agreement'. If a person does not attend one of the government's wonderful courses, such as Jobplan workshops or Restart, that person would automatically lose their entire entitlement to JSA for 2 weeks, without any right to claim a hardship payment. At present people receive reduced rate of Income Support - either 20% or 40% less, depending on circumstances. Thus, unemployed people will face more control and direction by a totally uncaring and unsympathetic government.

JSA is driven by a combination of Treasury pressure to save money, the 'new right' 's hostility to public expenditure, the welfare state, and their interest in workfare.

Workfare is an American idea that people should work for benefits: the perfect answer in developing a legitimate wage-slave labour market at the bottom end of the social spectrum: that is people who are unskilled, not highly educated, women, ethnic minorities etc.

Coupled with JSA is the Incapacity Benefit which replaced Invalidity Benefit in April 1995. This was introduced to take over 200,000 people off Invalidity Benefit, because of the growth of sick people in the

Jobs NOT J. S. A !

JOIN THE SOMERSET CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE

- * Are you being forced into a job or training that you don't want?
- * Are you currently being threatened with loss of benefit?
- * Are you willing to help us campaign against JSA?

IF SO, CONTACT:

MALCOLM ALLEN - Glastonbury Unemployment Action (Tel. 01458 833641)

GLEN BURROWS - Bridgwater Trades Council (Tel. 01278 450562)

JOHN GRANA - Yeovil Trades Council (Tel. 01935 79829)

MIKE LANGTON - Somerset Community Defence Campaign (Tel. 01823 278811)

or write to

Somerset Community Defence Campaign, 4 Gordon Terrace, Bridgwater

last 10 years, encouraged by the Tories to get people off the unemployment register, to make their figures look good. With over 200,000 people removed from Invalidity Benefit, that saving would be put aside for more tax cuts, as an incentive towards winning votes in the next General Election.

The JSA cuts Unemployment Benefit from 1 year to 6 months. It threatens to take away from thousands of sick and disabled people the right to any benefit at all. It is a major step towards Workfare.

Will JSA help unemployed people to get jobs? Research by the Independent Policy Studies Institute shows that JSA will not necessarily improve claimants' job prospects. Unemployed claimants are restricted in their search for meaningful work, which depends on the proportion of vacancies to job seekers. On average, unemployed claimants receive less than one job offer a year, and the rate is even lower for long-term unemployed people.

The Tory Government is trying to attract foreign investment into industry and business, by showing companies that the price of labour in the UK is negligible compared with other European states. Hence their resistance towards the European Social Chapter and a minimum wage structure.

Poverty exists for millions of people from all walks of life in Britain. People cannot & will not accept Government policy that denies citizens the right to live a reasonably comfortable life, without being further punished for being poor, badly educated, disabled, infirm. Less fortunate members of society should not and will not be allowed to become slaves in a capitalist free market culture.

**MALCOLM ALLEN, GLASTONBURY
NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT ACTION**

SOMERSET SOCIALIST INITIATIVE

At its August meeting in Bridgwater, the Somerset Community Defence Campaign agreed to the following course of action:

To establish during Autumn 1995 a Somerset Socialist Discussion Group@ to educate, agitate and organise for socialist principles across the Somerset area. This will run alongside the Somerset Community Defence Campaign, with a socialist discussion meeting one month held in a different town each time, followed by a SCDC meeting the next month in Bridgwater.

We have speakers available on many different subjects. If you would like to hold a meeting in your town or village, please contact 01278 450562

LAWRENCE DALY & THE FIFE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

A comment on Dave Chapple's article

Dave Chapple's article in the last Clarion gives serious attention to a local initiative which had some national impact. He is absolutely right in finding drink and 'sell out' inadequate explanations for Daly's failure. Our political failures are more likely to produce personal tragedies than the other way round. Nor is the fact that Daly's project took place away from a metropolis a reason for ignoring it. 'Fareweel tae Bonny Scotland: I'm awae tae Fife' is not an accurate description of Fife sentiment.

I saw little more of Daly than Dave did, so I found the part about his allies the most interesting part of the article. After all, Daly saw his struggle as part of a wider arena than the old kingdom of Fife.

Daly was very unusual in being a working class person associated with 'The Reasoner' (later the 'New Reasoner') which was overwhelmingly a journal of intellectuals horrified at Khrushchev's revelations. The Communist Party had been much more successful than any group before or since in holding workers and intellectuals in the same group. Daly was important to the 'New Reasoner' as they hoped to create a new version of that alliance. Their biggest success on those lines was CND Mark I. However, as Dave observes, once the Communist Party line changed and it swung behind CND, it was able to re-form its old act. Those like EP Thompson who were unwilling to rejoin it were left in the position of Wise without Morecambe, or Tattie without Grant. By the 1970's members of the, by then, Euro Communist CP could complain that although their politics and Thompson's were the same he stood apart: surely a fair comment.

Having seen more of Thompson and his tendency than I did of Daly, I wish that socialists would resist the temptation to create plaster saints out of dead heroes. Many of the obituaries of Thompson in the left press were as sick-making as those of John Smith elsewhere. Thompson was a great historian and a lousy politician. He carried the Communist Party's policy of a broad front with capitalist forces to ridiculous extremes. At meetings he did not always wait to be criticised by the left to launch into sectarian attacks on

the notion of class politics or independent working class action. At a meeting in Bristol in the mid-1970's he went on about the tradition of the British Commonwealth, to the bewilderment of young people.

I think Dave could have given more space to how much the world changed between 1957 and the mid-1960's. Those who thought of themselves as the New Left in 1968 had little in common with Thompson and the 'New Reasoner' tradition. Support for the Vietnam struggle was unacceptable to many who had backed CND. The militant shop stewards' movement of that time was rather different from the traditional alliance of labour leader and intellectual espoused by both the Communist Party and the New Reasoner. The Communist Party, which had struggled off the first New Left was unable to cope with the new times, although it took twenty years to die.

I agree that Daly's geographical isolation was a big factor in his defeat. Could that be remedied by having dozens of similar initiatives? The North Somerset Republic coming to the aid of the Kingdom of Fife? I doubt it: there is a great temptation for local movements with a potential electorate to avoid awkward questions. In Scotland in the 1950's that would mean keeping quiet about religious bigotry. In Somerset now, I suspect that those of us who see vegetarianism as a plot to persuade the workers to eat grass would be considered politically incorrect. Dave's mention of the lack of contact with the independent Black organisations which existed at the time is relevant here. A local movement based in an area with almost no Black people could hardly be expected to make their problems a central concern. Even if the FSL had survived, could its members ever have understood how such independent organisations were drowned by the State and municipally funded bodies a few years later? Participation in an international movement would help us fight such narrowness.

JOHN SULLIVAN
Bristol Marxist Forum

WE NEED A LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Socialists should not allow their opposition to the current leadership and its right-wing policies to cloud their judgement about the need to support the election of a Labour Government.

The election of a Labour Government will increase the confidence of the working class and its organisations. People will feel that changes which can benefit the working class are possible.

There will be many opportunities for socialists to influence a Labour Government. The unions will still hold half of the votes at the Labour Party Conference and there are still socialists in the Labour Party. New Labour is not yet entirely made up of Blairites. Socialists should join the Labour Party, or, if already members, stick with it.

Labour, even New Labour, is the only hope people have of better health care and welfare, a fairer education system and the creation of jobs. A Labour, even a New Labour, Government is a sight better than the alternative.

So, the message for Socialists is to support the Labour Party and campaign for Socialism inside the Party as well as on the streets. The Tories will continue to sell our labour on the cheap.

BOB CRAIG,
WESTON LABOUR PARTY

I am writing to say how disgusted I am at this penny-pinching government. I am a pensioner and not long widowed. I'm on Income Support & now I'm told by my dentist he can no longer treat me on the NHS as the blasted government have cut their pay. I've been treated by the same dentist for nearly 10 years. I have phoned all the dentists in Taunton & they are all going private. So, what happens when you are not able to pay? I won't be able to have my teeth seen to any more, as when I get my pittance of a pension, it's spoken for before I get it.
MRS JEAN DAVIES
A VERY ANGRY WIDOW & PENSIONER, TAUNTON